

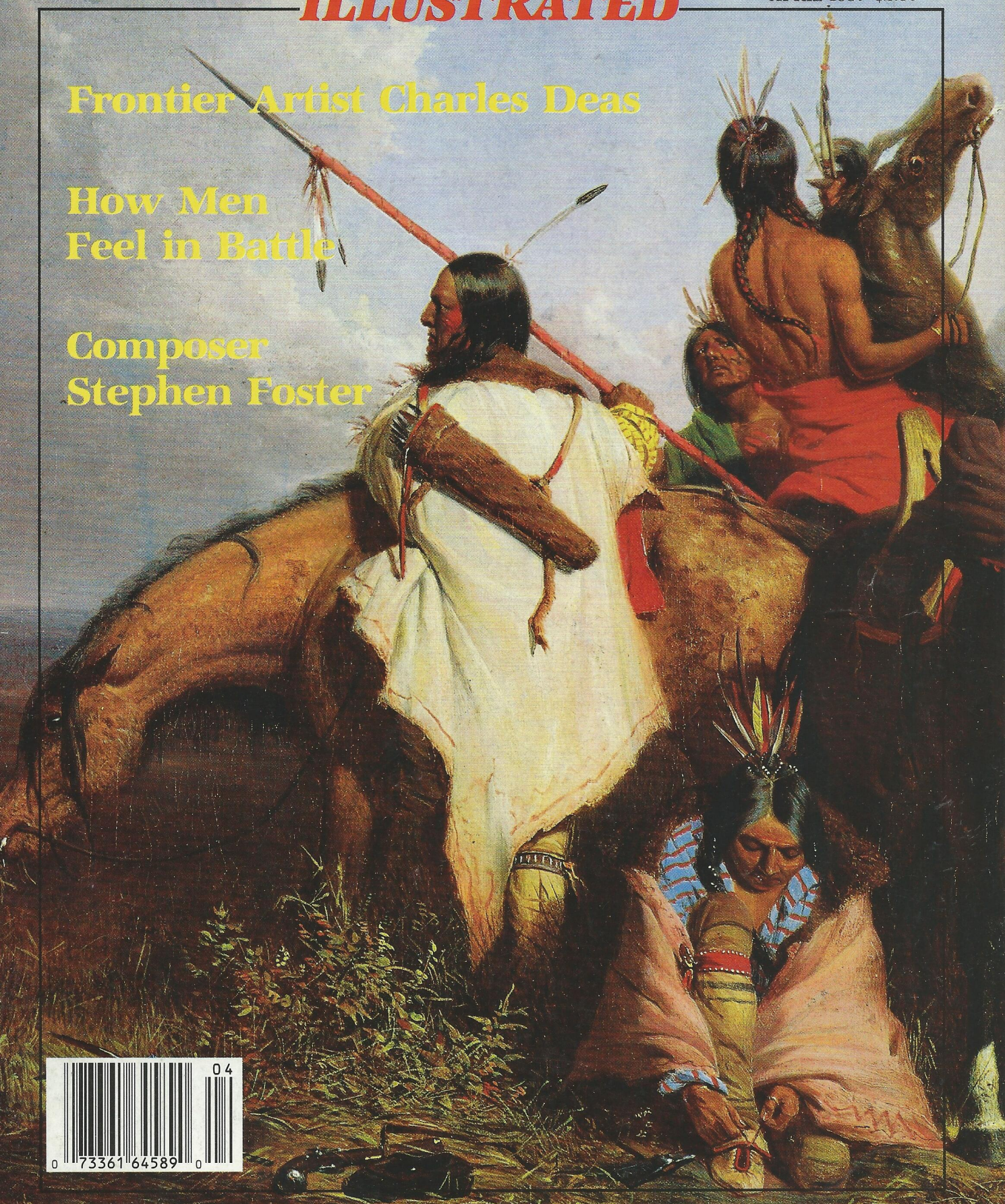
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How Men
Feel in Battle

Composer
Stephen Foster



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VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 2 APRIL 1987



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How Men Feel in Battle by S.H.M. Byers

As a young man, the author joined the Union army in search of "the adventure of war." Four decades later, he would write that "the memory of the past is now enough."

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Charles Deas by Carol Clark

This frontier artist "early distinguished himself by characteristic pictures of border life." But his promising career was destined to end prematurely in tragedy.

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Babe Didrikson by Joseph Gustaitis

Endowed with a rare combination of speed, strength, coordination, and intensity, this rangy, outgoing Texan may have been America's greatest athlete.

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As the most popular American composer of the mid-nineteenth century, Stephen Foster expressed the vibrant voice of the new American people.

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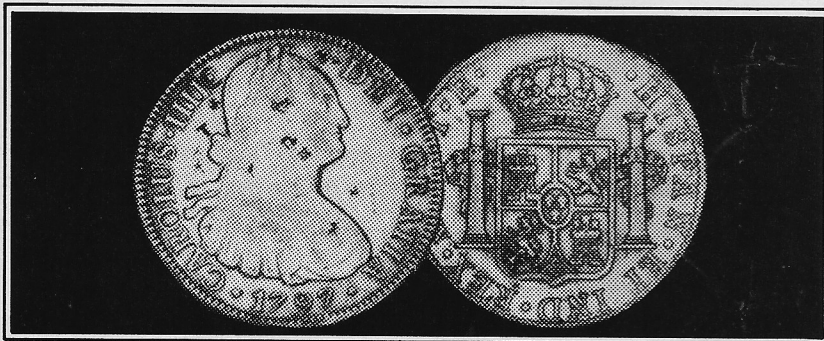
Although frontier artist Charles Deas was recognized in his day as a painter of considerable promise, his career was a tragically short one. *A Group of Sioux*, completed in 1845, is one of only a small number of Deas paintings still extant. An article and portfolio on this enigmatic artist, who is only now emerging from obscurity, appears on pages 18-33.

American History Illustrated (ISSN 0002-8770), is published monthly except July and August by Historical Times, Inc., 2245 Kohn Road, P.O. Box 8200, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8200. Subscriptions: \$18.00 a year. In Canada and all other countries, \$23.00. Second Class postage paid at Harrisburg, PA 17105 and at additional mailing offices. Printed by World Color Press, Effingham, IL. Other Historical Times Inc., publications include *British Heritage*, *Civil War Times Illustrated*, *Country Journal*, *Early American Life*, *Fly Fisherman*, *The Original New England Guide* and *Museum Editions Limited*. All rights reserved. Permission to reproduce the issue or portions thereof must be secured in writing from the editor. Address inquiries to *American History Illustrated*, Box 8200, Harrisburg, PA (717-657-9555). This magazine accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts not accompanied by return postage. Copyright 1987. Historical Times, Inc. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *American History Illustrated*, P.O. Box 1776, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

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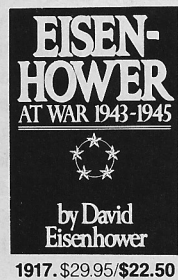
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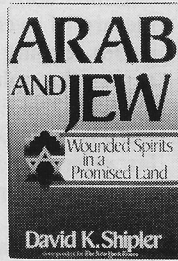
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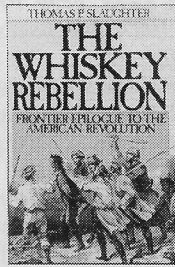
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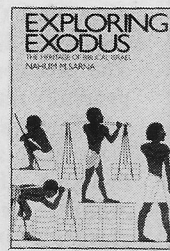
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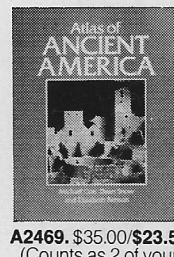
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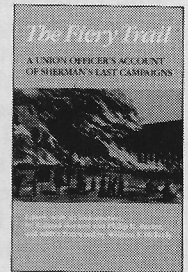
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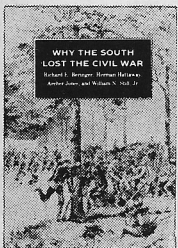
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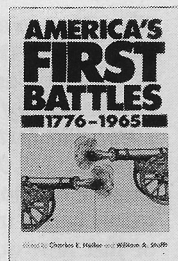
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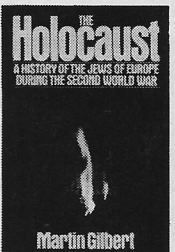
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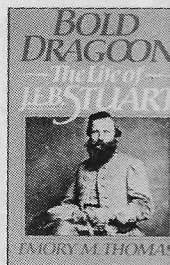
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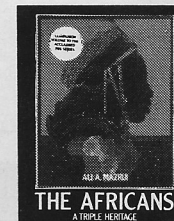
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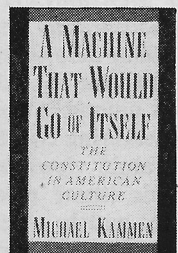
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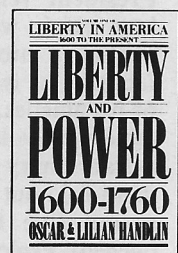
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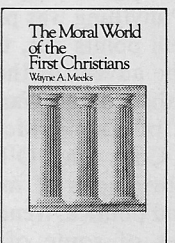
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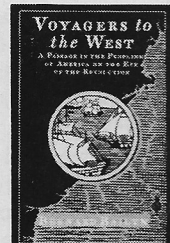
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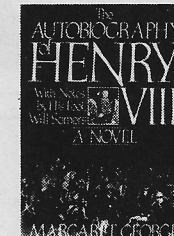
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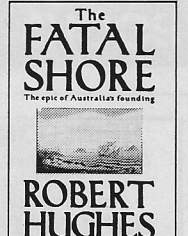
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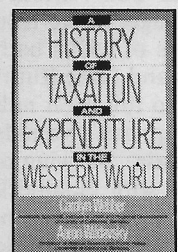
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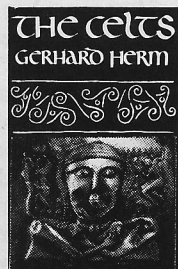
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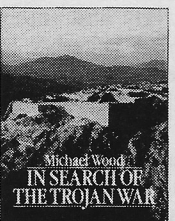
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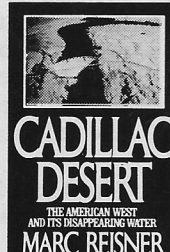
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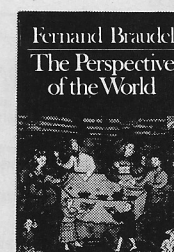
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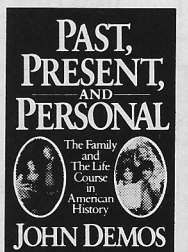
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American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-1960 by William L. O'Neill (*The Free Press, New York City, 1987; 300 pages, illustrated, \$19.95*).

The postwar, pre-Kennedy years are generally remembered as complacent and unremarkable ones. Rutgers University social historian and author of the acclaimed *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s*, William O'Neill takes a fresh look at the fifteen years that saw the rise of television, suburbia, the baby boom, Elvis Presley, and automania. Referring to the era as a high point in American social history, O'Neill describes 1945 to 1960 as a confident, secure time for America—a time of buoyant expectations and rare national unity. Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon occupied the White House, ushering in an era of conservatism in which America reigned supreme worldwide and "anything was possible." But, O'Neill points out, these years also saw the advent of the H-bomb, *Sputnik*, the Korean War, racial unrest, and, of course, McCarthyism and the Cold War. O'Neill provides broad overviews of major national social and political trends as well as vignettes of some of the unique idiosyncrasies of the years between 1945 and 1960, including Kinsey and the sexual revolution and rock and roll. Lively and entertaining, *American High* superbly recreates this unequaled era affectionately referred to as "the good old days."

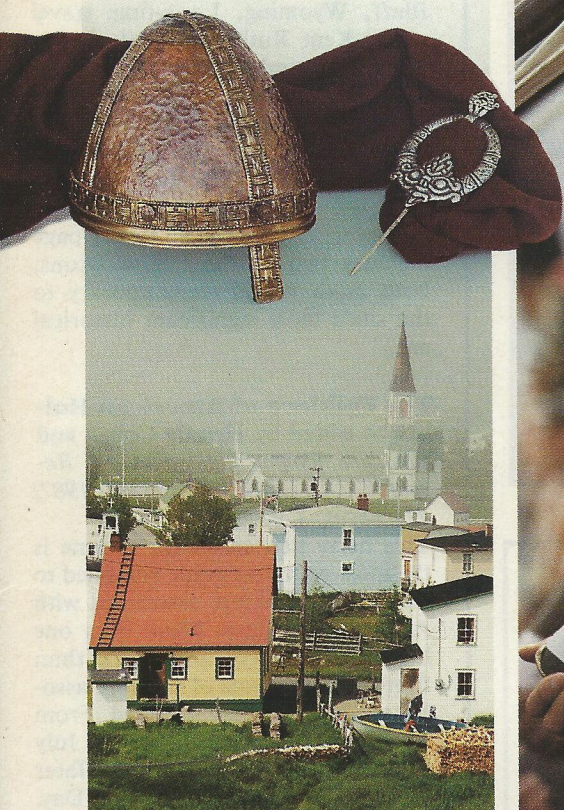
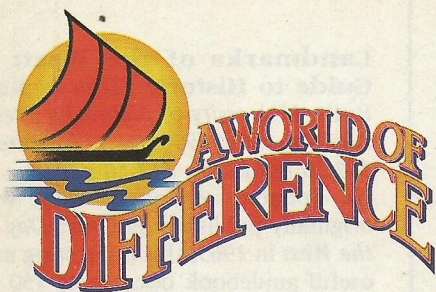
The Encyclopedia of American Facts & Dates by Gorton Carruth (*Harper & Row, New York City, 1987; 831 pages, \$29.95*).

Selected for use in the White House Library, this is the eighth edition of a widely used reference tool in the field of history. More than fifteen thousand facts and dates are included side by side under topics and in chronological order, tracing and illuminating all facets of the American experience from early exploration to modern technology, sports to science, fashion to politics, religion to the arts. One thousand years of American history, beginning with explorations and settlements as early as 986 A.D., are included. The volume is set up in a side-by-side manner so

that readers can learn about events chronologically by reading down the columns and can also get an overall picture of events in all subject categories for any given year by reading across the columns. First published in 1956, *The Encyclopedia of American Facts & Dates* has been a popular reference volume for three decades. Author Gorton Carruth has been editing reference books for thirty years and is former editor-in-chief of Funk and Wagnalls.

The Panoramic Photography of Eugene O. Goldbeck by Clyde W. Burleson and E. Jessica Hickman (*University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986; 120 text pages, illustrated, in slipcase, \$75.00*).

Eugene O. Goldbeck's photographic career began in 1901 when, as a child of just nine or ten, he dashed into a crowded street to snap a picture of President William McKinley. His love affair with photography has continued into the 1980s despite the fact that he is now on "the far side of his nineties." This unique coffee-table-sized volume, featuring twenty extraordinary panoramic views on multi-fold-out spreads (some measuring five feet in width when opened), explores the art and life of Goldbeck, an enigmatic and prolific photographer from San Antonio, Texas. Goldbeck images range from "wide-screen" views of 1920s bathing beauty contests and Babe Ruth's New York Yankees to full dress military units, the Egyptian pyramids, and Leningrad, Russia. Drawing on extensive interviews with Goldbeck, archival materials, newspapers, and Goldbeck's own files, authors Burleson and Hickman study his equipment, darkroom techniques, marketing strategies, and the fascinating images Goldbeck has recorded during his long career. The talented photographer also developed and patented some of his own photographic equipment. "Gene Goldbeck is living proof that the quality of the final print or negative comes more from the creative drive and physical stamina of the photographer than from expensive equipment," note the authors, who conclude that "after they made Gene Goldbeck, they destroyed the negative." Illustrations in duotone and color. ★



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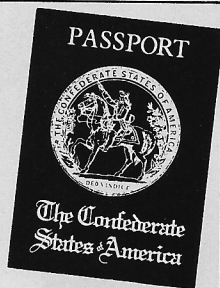
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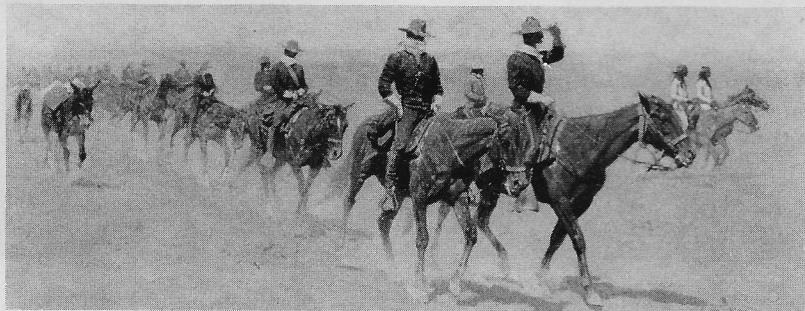
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Landmarks of the West: A Guide to Historic Sites by Kent Ruth (*University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1986; 295 pages, illustrated, \$38.50 hardback, \$17.50 paper*).

An updated version of what was originally published as *Great Day in the West* in 1963, this interesting and useful guidebook documents 150 of the most important historic sites in twenty-one western states, from Tombstone, Arizona, to Scotts Bluff, Wyoming. Long-time travel writer Kent Ruth consulted experts from state and regional groups familiar with their sectional histories in selecting the sites to be included and in explaining each location's past and significance. The text for each entry is one page in length (including a locator map), and the facing page includes two or three illustrations, both modern and contemporary to the site's most significant historical era.

The Folklore of American Holidays edited by Hennig Cohen and Tristram Potter Coffin (*Gale Research Co., Detroit, Michigan, 1987; 431 pages, \$78.00*).

This hefty new reference volume is the most complete guide compiled to date on the folklore associated with American holidays. More than one hundred holidays and more than four hundred items of folklore associated with them are included. From Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July to such obscure holidays as Tater Day and Kentucky Horse Sale Day, America's traditional celebrations are chronologically arranged, beginning with New Year's Day (January 1) and ending with the Twelve Days of Christmas. Each entry contains a description of the holiday's origins, historical background, and general characteristics. Legends, beliefs, proverbs, songs, recipes, dances, poems, and other associated lore are also featured. Bibliographic information follows each major entry, and detailed indexes provide access to subject, ethnic, collectors, song titles, and motifs. The steep price of the volume will limit its ownership to libraries and other larger organizations, but students, researchers, and general readers alike will find a wealth of fascinating information about American holidays within its pages. ★



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Edited by Paul Andrew Hutton

Introduction by Robert M. Utley

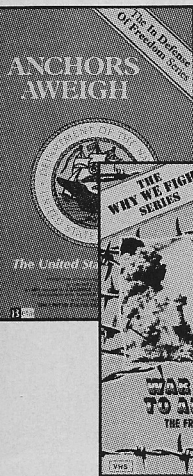
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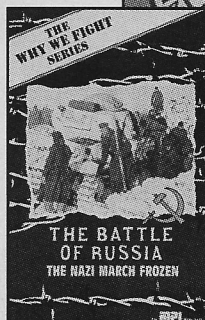
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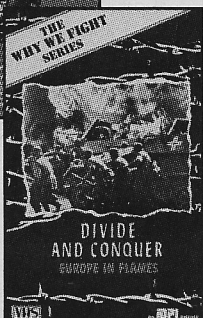


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As a young man, the author joined the Union army in search of glory and “the adventure of war.” Four decades later, he would write that “the memory of the past is now enough.”

How Men Feel in Battle

by S.H.M. Byers

SUMTER WAS FIRED UPON. I was twenty-two. I longed for the excitement of battle, the adventure of war; and so I enlisted in a regiment that was to be wiped out of existence before the war was over.

More than a year passed after my enlistment. It was noon now, of the nineteenth of September, 1862. Possibly the fiercest battle of the Civil War was about to begin—a battle in which our small brigade of three half-regiments was to lose six hundred and eight killed and wounded. My own regiment had four hundred and eighty-two engaged, and two hundred and seventeen of them, with fifteen officers, were stretched out dead or wounded within an hour. It was appalling. That was war. That afternoon put a star on the shoulder of General Rosecrans*.

My regiment had been hoping for a great fight. We were tired of chasing “Pap” Price’s** battalions and guerrillas from the Missouri River to the Ozark Mountains, tired of being killed off in running fights, skirmishes, and ambushes, where there was no honor. We wanted real war.

At last, at Iuka, down in Mississippi, and close to the Tennessee River, they said they would stand up and fight. And they did! Not a soldier in the Fifth Iowa was more anxious to participate in a red-hot battle than myself. I was among those who had volunteered not more for patriotism than for hope of tremendous adventure. My chance had come.

We marched from our camps at Jacinto as light-footed and as light-hearted that September morning as if we were going to a wedding. The sky was blue, the birds sang, the autumn leaves were red and beautiful. We seemed perfectly gay with anticipa-

**Brigadier General William S. Rosecrans, commander of Union Army forces at the Battle of Iuka. **Brigadier General Sterling Price, then commander of the Confederate Army of the West.*

“I wasn’t thinking of the country, or anything else save that miserable old ramrod and that line of fellows a hundred yards in front.”

tion of being killed. It seems astounding now. The fact is, no one thought himself in severe danger. Some of us would be killed, we knew, but each thought it would be the “other fellow.” We sang jovial songs as we marched along; one, a song of my own composing. That gorgeous forenoon, hurrying through the woods for twenty miles, towards the enemy, we saw the poetry of war. Sundown saw five of my messmates and forty-two of my regiment dead in a ditch by the battlefield. Another one hundred and seventy-five were wounded. And we had all been so happy in the morning!

An hour before the fight commenced, we soldiers feared the enemy might run and get away. At last a shot was heard in the woods in front of us. Our advance-guard had run on to some Confederates in gray. “Form your regiment instantly, right and left across this road,” cried a staff officer, galloping up to our beloved commander, Colonel Matthies. “Stand your ground here and fight them,” added the officer.

“Dat is just exactly vot I calculate to do,” answered our colonel in his Teutonic accent. In three minutes the line was across the road and every eye peering into the thin woods in front. Just then, to my amazement, the colonel galloped up to me and said: “You have got your musket but you must not fight. Something has happened to the quartermaster. Go back to the teams and hurry them ten miles to the rear.” I was the most disappointed man in Grant’s army. Protests did no good. “I trust you,” he said. “You must go; another time you shall have your chance.”

Orders were orders. I hurried away, with the oncoming battle sounding in my ears, and in my heart a fixed resolve never to obey orders again if that meant taking me from the side of my comrades.

When we got the news back at the wagon train that my regiment had been gloriously cut to pieces, I almost cried because I had lost the chance to fall in battle. The fighting had been something terrible. The combatants nearly exterminated each other. They fought so close that if a man was hit he was powder-burnt. One regiment of the enemy had every officer killed or wounded. Yet we wanted more of this.

TIME PASSED. My colonel kept his word. In a little time that same enemy, reinforced, rushed on to our works at Corinth, Mississippi. We were twenty-five thousand inside the town, and they were forty thousand outside. All the moonlit night of October 3 my regiment—what was left of it—lay in a wagon road in the woods outside the works of Corinth and listened to the rumbling of the Confederate artillery as it was moving into place to attack us on the morrow.

Samuel Byers took part in his first engagement at Corinth, Mississippi, in October 1862. Like the infantrymen in Gilbert Gaul’s The Skirmish Line (opposite), Byers found himself too occupied with the business of soldiering to reflect on the significance of war. “We went on firing, biting our cartridges and loading with iron ramrods as fast as we could,” he later wrote. “I was constantly afraid lest the enemy would be on me before I could get that fool gun loaded.”

This time no orders hindered. A comrade who escaped being killed at Iuka lay under a blanket with me in the wagon road and in the moonlight. The terrible experience at Iuka had sobered Jimmy King a little. He talked of what might happen at daylight. He said, too, he was “glad he had always led a good life.” As for me, I was hopeful of a big time. I might of course get wounded—I almost hoped for this little honor—but it was the “other fellow” who would certainly get killed.

At daybreak of the 4th, Fort Robinette was picked out by the enemy as one of the points for their great final assault, and it proved to be one of the awfulest and bloodiest assaults of the Civil War. There had been hard fighting all of the day of the 3rd, and all our outer works were in the enemy’s hands.

On the morning of the 4th, my regiment with its division was placed some distance to the right of Robinette. We were in a field of high weeds. The orders were to lie down, as the enemy in overpowering numbers was about to assault us directly in front. We lay there in the weeds for an hour without speaking. What a chance for strange thoughts! And the men, thinking of their comrades dead in the ditches of Iuka, did meditate. The suspense, lying there in the weeds, every moment expecting a crash of musketry in our faces, was something intense. The sun was red hot. Poor Billy Bodley, grieving for his only brother, just killed, crept over to me and whispered, “I am not afraid, but I am too sick to fight—you are the captain’s friend; ask him to let me go back.” He went, only to be killed on another field.

Bodley was just creeping back through the weeds when someone cried out to us to “rise and fire.” I was burning up with excitement, too excited to be scared. Instantly we were on our feet. I was in the rear rank. I could see the enemy perfectly. Some of them were in their shirt-sleeves, running from tree to tree and firing.

I raised my musket and blazed away at nobody in particular. A comrade in front of me afterward said I “nearly shot his ear off.” He glanced back once, he said, and I was only laughing. That was my first shot in an open, stand-up battle.



We went on firing, biting our cartridges and loading with iron ramrods as fast as we could. I was constantly afraid lest the enemy would be on me before I could get that fool gun loaded. The destiny of the country was in my hands at that moment; only I wasn't thinking of the country, or anything else save that miserable old ramrod and that line of fellows a hundred yards in front. I must have swallowed whole spoonfuls of gunpowder in my haste at biting the cartridges. I had thirst beyond description. My canteen was full of water, too, but who could stop then to take a drink!

The fighting went on some minutes, yet not many men were dropping near me right or left. It must have been a ruse of the enemy, for suddenly he massed a heavy column to our left, and almost passing us, made that dreadful and historic assault on bloody Robinette. My regiment made a quick wheel half-way round, and there we stood and witnessed as brave deeds as were ever seen in any war. No soldiers could have stormed that fort and held it, yet now, suddenly, a great black column of Confederates debouched from the woods, spread out fanlike, and with a yell started to capture Fort Robinette. In front of them and about them lay fallen trees, making a strong abattis; in front of these, a deep, wide ditch; and in front of that, the fort, filled with

cannon and soldiers.

Every gun was loaded to the muzzle, and as the Confederates approached, a horrible whirlwind of bullets, grapeshot, and canister poured into their faces. They never halted. General Rogers,* with a flag in one hand and a revolver in the other, led them straight into one of the awful death-traps of the war. Hundreds of them crossed the ditch, climbed into the fort, and with their muskets clubbed the men at the guns. Others lay dead on the fort's escarpment, their muskets folded in their arms.

Useless courage, vain glory. In a moment, new Federal lines rose up behind the fort, and all was lost. The Confederates fled back among their dead, trampling them as they ran. Twice they had passed in front of my regiment, once as victors and once in horrible defeat.

Standing there, looking at the horrible scene, and in the midst of the awful thunder of battle, I felt as if the world was coming to an end. It seemed to be the destruction of humanity, not a battle. If the ground had opened and swallowed us all up, it wouldn't have seemed strange. At that moment I was thinking neither of victory nor defeat. It was the tremendous spectacle,

*Colonel William P. Rogers.



the awful noise, that overwhelmed me. Had that charge succeeded, my regiment would have been lost.

We were speechless, breathless, as we watched the storming of the fort. Soon I went down to the grass before it. Six thousand dead and wounded Confederates lay in front of Corinth. I saw the body of Rogers, the bravest of the brave, lying there. He was in his white-stocking feet. Some vandal had robbed him of his boots. He lay on his back, his face to the foe.

That night in the moonlight I stood on guard on the battlefield. I was under an oak tree. The dead lay there unburied, among them two of my chums and classmates in a western school. I had time to meditate on the awfulness of war that night. But I did not. I was only thinking of the words of General Rosecrans, as he rode down the lines at Iuka, crying out, "Glorious Fifth Iowa!" I, too, in the moonlight on the battlefield was saying, "Glorious Fifth Iowa!" It was my regiment. How a soldier loves glory! I forgot my dead comrades and classmates in my pride in the regiment.

Forty years have since passed. As I write this, I do not know that even twenty of my regiment are alive. It was one of the commands that perished almost before the war was over. Later, when I was mustered out of the

army as an escaped prisoner, the secretary of war said to me: "You have no regiment. They are all gone. They fell gloriously. You are the last man of the regiment." Is it any wonder that there, on the battlefield, alone in the moonlight, I was thinking only of the deeds of the regiment?

I SKIP A FEW MONTHS. Again the chance is mine. I had not yet been killed or hurt. I had volunteered that something might happen. I wanted more adventure, and more and more; and it was all coming, but I did not know it. A last great attempt was to be made on Vicksburg. We had made so many attempts and failed. In all, ten thousand lives had been lost and Vicksburg was still standing there, a defiance to the Union army.

A European war-office would have court-martialed General Grant for leaving his base as he did now, putting a mighty river behind him and starting into an enemy's country, almost without food for man or beast. There we now were, marching behind Vicksburg—here, there, anywhere—walking through dust shoe-mouth deep, roasting in the sun, sleeping in the road, fighting everywhere—Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hills—victories every one.

“In the midst of the awful thunder of battle, I felt as if the world was coming to an end.”

Victor Nehlig's drawing of Civil War infantry in hand-to-hand combat (opposite) aptly re-creates some of the sense of chaos repeatedly witnessed by Samuel Byers and his comrades during the collision of Union and Confederate armies. "Looking at the horrible scene," recalled Byers of one engagement, "it seemed to be the destruction of humanity, not a battle."

We hardly waited to bury the dead. Day and night we kept going. We just marched and fought. At Jackson, an awful thunderstorm accompanied the battle. Forty years after, I still laugh to think how a hundred times we soldiers dropped flat on our faces at every mighty clap of thunder, thinking it an exploding shell from the guns of the enemy.

Suddenly Pemberton,* with all his army, came boldly out of Vicksburg, to give us one great battle. He chose his ground among the magnolia woods of Champion Hills. My chance for adventure had come again.

On the night of May 15, 1863, my regiment got hold of a little flour. At dawn of the 16th we were mixing it with water, making dough balls to bake on the end of our ramrods over our little bivouac fires in the woods. It was all we had to eat. Once we heard faint sounds of cannon far away. Some horsemen were passing the bivouac. It was just daylight. I went out to the roadside, and there I saw General Grant galloping past, followed by aides who were jumping their horses over logs and stumps, trying to keep up with the commander. There were more sounds of cannon.

“Fall in,” sounded down the regiment. In five minutes we were making a forced march for Champion Hills. The fight had commenced and we were a dozen miles away. How we traveled! The cavalry did not more than keep up with us. We were nearly dying with thirst. The day was terrifically hot. As we neared the battlefield, we passed a dirty pond of water. We left the ranks and filled our canteens and stomachs with a fluid fit only for swine to wallow in. One can't be too fastidious with a battle coming on.

Already hundreds of wounded men were being rushed to the rear. In a little time my regiment was stretched out in line of battle at the side of an open field. Beyond that field, in the wood and hills, the enemy was firing random shots into our silent, unresisting line.

What we were doing there, Heaven only knows. How little a subordinate soldier ever knows as to what he is about! His business is to march, keep still, be shot to pieces, and say nothing! The suspense of standing in that line was something awful. We were being shot

down, and not firing a shot in return. There was again a chance to think, and I was thinking if I had not had enough of fool adventure! I was quartermaster-sergeant, anyway. My post was at a safe place with the train, at the rear. Yet, here I was, just as in every fight of the Vicksburg campaign, volunteering to get myself shot. The colonel had allowed a convalescent to perform my duties while I went forth in search of fame.

I hadn't long to think, for shortly General Grant rode up behind my regiment and dismounted, almost where I was standing in the line. It was something to see him in battle, and so close I could almost hear his talk. He had the inevitable cigar as he leaned against his horse, listening to the reports of aides as they galloped up to him. An occasional man in the regiment threw up his arms, dropped his musket and fell dead. It created no remark. We just stood on, wondering what next. There was some mysterious nodding of heads between our colonel and General Grant. And then suddenly came an order—“Fix bayonets—forward—double-quick—charge!” We started on the run. Grant, I noticed, mounted his horse and rode away.

As we were about to move, the colonel made me acting sergeant-major of the regiment. To be promoted right then, in such a place! General Grant, commanding the army, was not so proud as I was. Fear or no fear, I could do nothing now but pitch in and fight. Honor was at stake!

We charged up and into the woods, under a heavy fire—till, suddenly, we were stopped by a blazing line of Confederate musketry. Then the two lines, the blue and the gray, stood for two mortal hours (though it did not seem but a few minutes to me) and poured hot musketry into each other's faces. I was struck twice, but slightly hurt. Comrades near me I saw covered with blood, their faces black with powder, fighting on. The dead lay everywhere unnoticed. Again I was biting cartridges and hurrying with that awful ramrod. A Confederate shot his ramrod through my hand. I was too busy, too excited, too hot, too thirsty, to think of it—to think of anything but loading and firing and standing my ground.

We were winning Vicksburg right there, making Grant president that afternoon. Every torn face was a step toward the city, every dead man a ballot for the White House, yet neither White House nor ballot nor Vicksburg was in our thoughts. Would that awful line in front of us ever give way? That was all.

The terrific fighting continued. I emptied my musket forty times at men in front of me. Some took cartridges from the dead and fired fifty, sixty times. Once we were being flanked. A boy ran up to me crying: “My regiment has run. What will I do?” “Stay right here!” I shouted. “Load and fire!” He did, until both his legs

*Lieutenant General John Clifford Pemberton, “the Defender of Vicksburg.”

**“I had, as a boy, often wondered how men feel
in wartimes . . . I had longed for adventure. The memory
of the past is now enough.”**

were shot off by a cannon-ball. That was war! I was getting adventure, too—lots of it!

BEFORE SUNDOWN the battle was over. Leaving our dead unburied, our wounded in the woods, we hurried on. We had taken Vicksburg, out there under the magnolia-trees of Champion Hills. The awful fighting for the city forts, later, would have been in vain had Grant's army been defeated that afternoon in May. We went on to the Black River and fought again.

Not knowing of our victories, the government ordered Grant to abandon the campaign; let Vicksburg go. Think of it! The messenger came to him as he sat on his horse watching some brave regiments storm the breastworks defending Black River bridge. “It is too late,” he said to the messenger. “Look yonder. Forty cannon are in our hands.” And then, sitting there in his saddle on the battlefield, he wrote General Sherman a letter in pencil, telling of the victory.

Soon we approached the mighty forts and lines surrounding Vicksburg. The soldiers had had so many victories that they believed they could storm the works. Grant let them try. That 22nd of May saw the Union army hurled back into its own breastworks. The charge had been made by thirty-five thousand men. My own brigade and regiment advanced at the center. Three hundred cannon and all the mortar boats bombarded the city before the charge. The Fifth Iowa crept up through the gullies and ravines very close to the fort. The cannonading and the hot sun made the warring terrible.

I was ordered to carry some ammunition to the boys at the very front. The regiment lay against the hillside under a galling fire. One hardly dared lift his head above the ground, fearing to be killed. I got my bundles of cartridges to the men and sat down in a depression in the hillside. I was safe as long as I did not move. Once more I had a chance to think, there, with the bullets whizzing within three feet of me. We could go neither forward nor back. We were just sitting around and being killed. Still the attack had not been given up.

While I was sitting in that protected spot, a dozen soldiers with heads bowed low crept past me. Each carried a musket and a little ladder. They were to make the desperate attempt to try and place these ladders across the ditch, when the regiment would climb over them and cross into the works. These laddermen passed so close I could look into their eyes. For once, at least, I felt death to be hovering very near. These men had surely volunteered to die. Few, or none of them, ever were seen again.

Our assault failed. Our whole brigade crept down the gullies and ravines as best we could, and got away. Again we tried it at another point, and there our leader,

*Following the repulse of a Confederate force at Battery Robinette, Corinth, Mississippi, young Samuel Byers finally had time to meditate on the horror of combat (opposite). * But honor and pride in regiment, he found, proved as powerful as awe of the terrible spectacle, or sorrow for lost comrades. It would take four years of war, with time spent as a prisoner of war, and years more after that, before his deepest feelings would prevail. War, Byers concludes, is a paradox of conflicting emotions.*

Colonel Boomer, calling to the Iowa men to follow him, was shot dead. It was sundown and the storming of the city was abandoned.

The siege commenced. Like beavers, we dug and dug until all of the hills in front of the forts were honeycombed with rifle-pits. Every soldier at the front fired his hundred rounds a day, whether an enemy was seen or not. The men inside the forts did the same with us, and at intervals a hundred cannon poured exploding shells into the city.

One morning when I was out at the front rifle-pits, I saw General Matthies creeping along the galleries to the pit where I was firing. He had a package in his hand wrapped in brown paper. To my astonishment he unfolded the paper and gave me an officer's sash. No wonder it hangs above my table as I write. “You are to be the adjutant of the regiment,” he said. I do not know if the roar of the musketry then going on drowned my voice as I tried to thank him, or if in the circumstance of war he witnessed my delight.

At a later battle, in the storming of Missionary

**“The gathered Confederate dead before Battery Robinett[el],” reads the caption for this photograph in an old history of the war, “taken the morning after their desperate attempt to carry the works by assault. No man can look at this awful picture and wish to go to war. These men, a few hours before, were full of life and hope and courage. Without the last two qualities they would not be lying as they are pictured here. In the very foreground, on the left, lies their leader, Colonel Rogers, and almost resting on his shoulder is the body of the gallant Colonel Ross. We are looking from the bottom of the parapet of Battery Robinette.*

“Let an eye-witness tell of what the men saw who then glanced along their musket-barrels and pulled the triggers: ‘Suddenly we saw a magnificent brigade emerge in our front; they came forward in perfect order, a grand but terrible sight. At their head rode the commander, a man of fine physique, in the prime of life—quiet and cool as though on a drill. The artillery opened, the infantry followed; notwithstanding the slaughter they were closer and closer. Their commander [Colonel Rogers] seemed to bear a charmed life. He jumped his horse across the ditch in front of the guns, and then on foot came on. When he fell, the battle in our front was over.’”



Ridge,* I saw him sitting under a tree, bleeding from a wound in his head that later led him to his grave. It was in a pause of the battle of Chattanooga. I was lying on the grass between two lines of the enemy. All around me were dead and wounded. Again I was having adventure. Again I had a chance to think.

And before the doors of a Southern prison closed on me, as I lay there on the grass for just one moment, my mind went back to that village green where I had volunteered to go out and fight and, maybe, win adventure. I had had it all—and the worst, a thousand times, was yet to come. In a few minutes the Confederate lines closed in on me, and eighty of my regiment, of whom a handful only were ever to return, were marched away to Libby Prison.

Many times I escaped, only to be retaken. Once, foot-free in the Confederacy, I entered a Southern regiment and, inside Atlanta, saw what great battles were from the standpoint of the Southern side. At last I got away, was placed on the staff of the great William T. Sherman in the Carolinas, and was the first to carry the news of his victories to the government at Washington.

*November 25, 1863, near Chattanooga.

I had, as a boy, often wondered how men feel in war-times. After four years of war, adventure, and prison, I found it out. In all of the Civil War I slept but eight nights in a bed at home. I had longed for adventure. The memory of the past is now enough. ★

Samuel Hawkins Marshall Byers enlisted in the Fifth Iowa Volunteers at Burlington, Iowa, on July 15, 1861. During 1862-63 he took part in a series of battles in Mississippi, including Corinth and Vicksburg. Byers eventually became adjutant of his regiment, winning successive promotions that carried him from corporal to major. On November 25, 1863, he was taken prisoner at Missionary Ridge during the campaign for Chattanooga, and he was subsequently confined in prison camps in Georgia and South Carolina. (While a prisoner at Columbia, South Carolina, Byers wrote a poem that was set to music and smuggled into northern hands; more than a million copies of "When Sherman Marched down to the Sea" were published.) After several escape attempts, Byers successfully reached Union lines and was assigned to the staff of General William Sherman. He was mustered out of the service on March 19, 1865.

This article, written some forty years after the Civil War, first appeared in the May 1906 issue of Harper's Monthly Magazine.



This frontier artist “early distinguished himself by characteristic pictures of border life.” But his promising career was destined to end prematurely in tragedy.

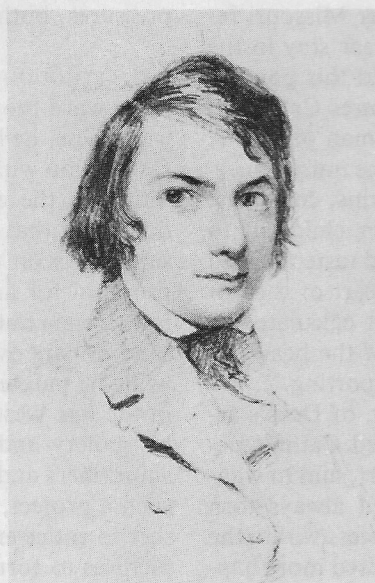
Charles Deas

by Carol Clark

DURING HIS brief productive life, Charles Deas was recognized both as a promising artist of genre and literary scenes and as one properly devoted to a national subject matter drawn from the Far West. His life was a unified artistic endeavor consisting of equal parts of nature, literature, and imagination, with additional inspiration drawn from striking images by a variety of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century artists.

For more than a century Deas has been one of the most enigmatic and least-known of America's frontier artists. Although he was a prolific painter during his twelve-year career, not many of his works have survived. We have only a very few letters from Deas's hand, and none that disclose much about his attitudes toward his life or his art. After his death in 1867 Deas was accorded no more than brief mention in any histories of art or even in histories of his adopted town of St. Louis. It was not until the 1940s that scholars began to devote some attention to him.

Fortunately, enough facts can be gleaned from a variety of sources to obtain a fairly complete portrait of Deas's life and career. Contemporary reviews of his ex-



hibited works reveal a great deal about the paintings we know and about others that have disappeared. Some of his pictures have been preserved through engravings and lithographs. Deas was mentioned in newspaper articles of his day and in the travel writings of two of his contemporaries, J. Henry Carleton and Charles Lanman. Most of the available information about the artist, however, comes from a long biographical sketch by Henry Tuckerman, first published anonymously in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1846. Tuckerman praised Deas for his depiction of what is “truly remarkable in our scenery,” a subject that “has not been more ardently explored by [other] native artists and authors”

even though “it is in our border life alone that we can find the materials for national development as far as literature and art are concerned.” Curiously, Tuckerman saw the exploitation of native subjects less as a means of eliciting the admiration of an American audience than as a way of gaining “instant attention in Europe.”

Before the artist's birth on December 22, 1818, his family moved from South Carolina to Philadelphia, and it was there that Deas grew up and was educated in the classics and art. By the autumn of 1835 he had moved with his widowed mother to upstate New York. Within the year, following an unsuccessful attempt to obtain an appointment to West Point, he set out upon an artistic career. In 1839, after the critical success of his literary genre pictures *The Turkey Shoot* and *The Devil and Tom Walker*, Deas was elected an associate of the National

This article is adapted from a chapter in American Frontier Life: Early Western Painting and Prints (introduction by Peter H. Hassrick and with chapters by Ron Tyler, Carol Clark, Linda Ayres, Warder H. Cadbury, Herman J. Viola, H.B. Crothers, Maureen Hannan, and Bernard Reilly, Jr.). © Cross River Press, Ltd. To be published in May 1987 by Abbeville Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

“Mr. Deas seemed to possess the whole secret of winning the good graces of the Indians . . .”

Academy of Design. One of the requirements of admission was the submission of an original artwork, and the following year the twenty-two-year-old artist offered his *Self-Portrait* [reproduced on page 19].

The picture reveals a restless young man; and we may gather from Deas having executed at least fourteen pictures in two years that he was energetic—even impatient—as well. By 1840 he began to seek new experiences outside of the cities and domesticated countryside he had known. Unable to pursue a military career as an officer, he longed for adventure nonetheless and headed west in search of it.

Tuckerman's account also suggests another possible motive for Deas's western journey. Frontier artist George Catlin had opened his Indian gallery in New York on September 25, 1837, with an exhibition of hundreds of Indian portraits and scenes of their dances and hunts, as well as landscapes of the Upper Missouri region, all painted during Catlin's seven-year stay in the Far West. It is probable that Deas visited this popular show and attended one of the many lectures Catlin delivered to accompany it. And, as Tuckerman observed, “To visit the scenes whence Catlin drew the unique specimens of art, to study the picturesque forms, costumes, attitudes and grouping of Nature's own children; to share the grateful repast of the hunter and taste the wild excitement of frontier life, in the very heart of the noblest scenery of the land, was a prospect calculated to stir the blood of one with a true sense of the beautiful and a natural relish for woodcraft and sporting.”

We know nothing for certain, however, of Deas's aspirations or motives. He may have shared Catlin's desire to abandon civilization, at least in part, and to wander in the wilderness. Yet Catlin seemed always torn between East and West, ambitious for success within the society he shunned, while Deas compromised more happily for some eight years of artistic activity; he lived in a frontier town (St. Louis), participated in its artistic life, and exhibited his pictures there as well as back east in New York and Philadelphia.

What became for Deas a changed way of life, an extended opportunity to experience the conjunction of two potentially antagonistic cultures, may in fact have begun as an intended summer in the wilderness, a visit to his brother's headquarters in Wisconsin Territory. There was another family connection with the West as well, through Deas's maternal uncle, who, as governor of Arkansas Territory, had successfully dealt with the Indians there. And there were the artist's apparent literary interests, which could have tuned him to western travel. James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie* was published in 1827, and Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*, recounting an 1832 trip to the West, was issued in 1835.

Contemporary western artists other than Catlin also may have influenced Deas's interests. The late 1830s saw western travel by several artists, such as the Baltimore painter Alfred Jacob Miller, whose 1837 journey to the fur trade rendezvous may have come to Deas's attention. Seth Eastman, drawing instructor at West Point at the time of Deas's application, had been with the army at forts Crawford and Snelling between 1831 and 1833, and he would return to Fort Snelling in September 1841, just after Deas's stay there. George Caleb Bingham, an artist from Missouri, exhibited *Western Boatmen Ashore* at the Apollo Gallery in 1838, the year before Deas made his debut there. Whatever the specifics that motivated Deas, western scenes and narratives were popular in the late 1830s. Finally, as subsequent events in the artist's life suggest, the frontier may have appealed to him as an escape from civilization's pressures, both external and internal.

ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO SENSE of Deas's attitude toward the Indians before his first journey into the wilderness, he had by 1846 recounted to Tuckerman his fascination with their appearance and their ways. In addition to the extant paintings, we have an important document that can be assumed to reflect the artist's mature views on the Indian. Written in late 1848, it is a proposal for an Indian gallery. Deas tried, through an influential relative in South Carolina, to raise five thousand dollars over a five-year period to support himself while he painted from the sketches made during his life in the Far West. He planned to exhibit the paintings in his gallery and divide the profits among the gallery's subscribers and himself. This is the only hint we have of such a project, and we may assume that Deas failed either to entice enough subscribers or to complete enough pictures to form a gallery.

The language describing the gallery's purpose is very like Catlin's and enlightens us about Deas's attitude toward the Indian after almost eight years of living in the West, traveling among its people, and painting their images: “[the artist] has it much at heart to save from oblivion a Race, now fast disappearing from the face of the Earth.” Deas thus shared a view of the doomed Indian with Catlin and John Mix Stanley, two other artists who had created and toured Indian galleries. Deas may have known as well of Charles Bird King's portraits of Indians who were on delegations to the capital; these were in the government's collection in Washington.

From Deas's proposal we also learn the value he placed on the “several years passed among” the Indians and of his “uncommon opportunities of seeing the different tribes that inhabit the Forests of our vast Western Country”—experiences giving authority to the paintings he proposed.

Winnebagos Playing Checkers (1842)

Painted after a year-long sojourn through the Wisconsin Territory, Charle Deas's intimate study of Winnebagos at leisure reflects the artist's keen sense of observation and also his remarkable ability to secure the Indians' confidence. "Whenever he entered a lodge," wrote a companion on a later expedition into the wilderness, "it was with a grand flourish and

a mock bow that would put even an Ottoman in ecstasies. And, as he said he was sure they did not understand English, he always gave his salutations in French and with a tone and gestures so irresistibly comic that, generally, the whole lodge would burst into a roar of laughter, though not a shadow of a smile could be seen on his face."



Sioux Playing Ball (1843)

In the summer of 1841 Deas travelled up the Mississippi River as far as Fort Snelling, where he had an opportunity to observe and paint the Sioux who gathered around the fort. There he witnessed the excitement of Sioux games and feasts and "saw some admirable specimens of the human form" and "all the display of which the Indians were capable." "I may mention . . . to the curious in Aboriginal matters," a visitor to the artist's St. Louis studio later wrote, "that Mr. D. has a large and elegant collection of Indian portraits and graphic sketches, illustrative of their manners and customs, all drawn from nature, and with remarkable skill and fidelity."



“[The artist] has it much at heart to save from oblivion a Race, now fast disappearing from the face of the Earth.”

With Tuckerman as our guide, we can follow Charles Deas during his more than a year of travel in the Wisconsin Territory during 1840-41. Only two of Deas's paintings dated from this period survive, but we know from Tuckerman that the artist had numerous opportunities to sketch and to paint. His first look at Indians occurred on the way to Prairie du Chien as he traveled the lake route to Mackinaw and saw “genuine sons of the wilderness . . . camped on the beach.” He reached his destination through the interior of Wisconsin to Green Bay and via Fort Winnebago and Fox Lake. Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River was Deas's home for most of the next year, and it was from there that he ventured out to see different terrain and other Indian tribes. Tuckerman reports that, through the auspices of Deas's brother and the fort's commanding officer, and “gentlemen connected with the Fur companies, Deas was enabled to collect sketches of Indians, frontier scenery and subjects of agreeable reminiscence and picturesque incident, enough to afford material for a painting.”

During several seasons at Fort Crawford, Deas saw many sides of Indian and frontier life. “The groups of half-breeds, Indians, and *voyageurs*, always to be found about the trading-houses and fur depots, realized all that an artist needs in the way of frontier costume and manners,” noted Tuckerman. The artist was able to “observe the expression of Indian character” during a number of incidents at the fort, not the least of which was the confrontation between vengeful Sac and Fox Indians and the Winnebago leader Keokuk, which led to “many serio comic scenes.”

Deas also made at least six forays from the fort, especially to see the Winnebagos, who that year were being removed from their most recent home in Iowa and settled farther west—a dislocation that may well have excited Deas's sympathy.

At Fort Winnebago Deas “paint[ed] the likenesses of the prominent members of the tribe,” and at Painted Rock he saw Winnebagos “to advantage in their everyday life.” Tuckerman wrote that “the most extraordinary incidents presented themselves; and in the stillness of the moonlit nights, the echoes of the Indian lover's flute blent with the battle-chant or the maiden's shrill song.” In Tuckerman's retelling, the experience was uncommonly romantic, yet not without a consciousness of the reality of the Indian's plight: “sickness in all its stages was there, from the first listlessness of ague to the raging madness of high fever. All were attacked, from the mother with her first-born to the aged crone, from the venerable sachem to the young warrior.”

The following summer, in 1841, Deas traveled up the Mississippi to Fort Snelling to paint the Sioux there. With the persuasive charm he would use again and again

in the West, he repeatedly overcame the Indians' natural reluctance to have their image “taken.” He also witnessed the excitement of Sioux games and feasts and “saw some admirable specimens of the human form” and “all the display of which the Indians were capable.”

Of the many sketches and portraits Tuckerman reported that Deas painted in the West during his year at Fort Crawford and vicinity, only *Lion* (a portrait of one of territorial governor Henry H. Sibley's wolfhounds) and *Fort Snelling*, neither dated, still exist. Yet we know from Tuckerman that Deas painted portraits of the “fine-looking Sioux in the vicinity” of the fort, and from a local newspaper notice that he exhibited “Portraits of several Indians, taken from life” and “Several Portraits” at the autumn Mechanics' Fair in St. Louis, where he had taken up residence by November 1841.

ST. LOUIS, a former Indian trading post and rendezvous for trappers, was a hub of life on the western frontier and one of the gateways to the West. A city active with trade, commerce, and manufacturing, St. Louis was, according to British visitor George Ruxton, home to a varied population of early settlers, merchants, and an upper class “who form a little aristocracy even here,” a “large floating population of foreigners of all nations,” and a “large . . . population still connected with the Indian and fur trade, who preserve all their characteristics unacted upon by the influence of advancing civilization.”

Ruxton found “the most singular” of St. Louis's “casual population [to be] the mountaineers, who, after several seasons spent in trapping, and with good store of dollars, arrive from the scene of their adventures, wild as savages, determined to enjoy themselves for a time, in all the gaiety and dissipation of the western city.” It is difficult to imagine a richer source of imagery for an artist interested in characterization.

From Deas's early participation in the Mechanics' Fairs we also learn something of his political life in St. Louis. Founded in 1839, the Mechanics' Institute had been created for the “promotion and encouragement of Manufactures and the Mechanical and usefull Arts.” Its membership consisted of “Manufactureres, Mechanics, Artizans, and persons friendly to the Mechanic Arts.” Although it included stonecutters, carpenters, and a few artists, the group was dominated by merchants, especially of the Whig party. While Deas may have seen the annual fairs as opportunities to exhibit his paintings and so gain patrons or commissions, his election as a resident member in November 1842 suggests he may also have shared some of the merchants' political views, which supported a federal presence in the territories but opposed continental expansion.

Frontier Art on Tour

"American Frontier Life: Western Paintings and Prints," an exhibition organized in association with the book excerpted on these pages, will visit three major museums during 1987-88. Featuring works by frontier artists George Caleb Bingham, Charles Deas, William Ranney, and Arthur F. Tait, the exhibition of sixty paintings and prints will also include pictures by George Catlin, John Mix Stanley, Charles Wimar, Seth Eastman, and Alfred Jacob Miller. Exhibition dates are as follows: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming: June 12 through September 10, 1987; Amon Carter Museum at Fort Worth, Texas: October 17, 1987 through January 3, 1988; and Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: January 28 through April 22, 1988.

Several of Deas's extant paintings from his first year or two in St. Louis reflect his previously cultivated interest in the Winnebagos. *Winnebagos Playing Checkers* [reproduced on page 21] was one of Deas's most important pictures of this period. It was only one of a large group of paintings Deas exhibited at the Mechanics' Fair in 1842, which included "a number of portraits of Indian chiefs, landscape paintings . . . [a] scene of the Illinois troops crossing Cedar Creek, the Interior of a Winnebago Winter Lodge, and the Game of Checkers or Drafts, and the Sisseton Sioux playing at Ball." If the quality of all was as high as suggested by *Winnebagos Playing Checkers*, it must have been an impressive display. The critic for the *Daily Missouri Republican* commended the group as "very fine paintings, as well as accurate in delineation."

The following year, in *Sioux Playing Ball* [page 22], Deas painted lacrosse, a more violent game. Lacrosse was played in summer and winter alike and was especially popular with artists as a grand and savage spectacle. Here Deas chose the summer game, played by highly painted, almost naked Sioux. He focused on the confrontation of two intent players—almost mirror images in their poses—and in the efforts of their opponents to bring them down.

After two years in St. Louis, Deas, as far as we know, ventured onto the plains once more, this time with Major Clifton Wharton's August-September 1844 expedition from Fort Leavenworth to the Pawnee villages on the Platte River. The purpose of the expedition was to confirm friendly relations with the Pawnee and to moderate their disputes with neighboring tribes.

Deas's presence is noted in Major Wharton's official journal of the expedition: "Mr. Charles Deas of St. Louis, an intelligent Artist, has become a partner in our expected toils and pleasure." But it is from the unofficial journal of Lieutenant J. Henry Carleton, assistant

commissary for the Dragoons, that we learn of Deas's intention to "make many fine additions to his already extensive and truly beautiful gallery of paintings." Deas must have found a kindred spirit in the young lieutenant, who loved the scenic beauty of the prairies the expedition crossed, was fascinated by the animal life observed, had a deep interest in the Indians and their lives, and, as something of a writer, desired to express the experiences he shared with the artist.

Carleton describes Deas's exotic appearance in "a broad white hat—a loose dress, and sundry traps and truck hanging about his saddle, like a fur-hunter." The artist's appearance and jaunty attitude prompted the soldiers to call him "Rocky Mountains;" he especially impressed Carleton as a free spirit: "He had a Rocky Mountain way of getting along, for, being under no military restraint, he could go where he pleased, and come back when he had a mind to."

Carleton recorded Deas's manner of putting his sitters at ease through humor, cajolery, and an elaborate display of manners as he chattered in French while he painted. "Mr. Deas seemed to possess the whole secret of winning the good graces of the Indians . . . he always gave his salutations in French and with a tone and gestures so irresistibly comic that, generally, the whole lodge would burst into a roar of laughter, though not the shadow of a smile could be seen on his face."

There are no sketches extant of the camp or portraits of Indians from this trip, with the possible exception of an untitled sketch of a military expedition crossing a river, composed in Deas's typical manner and in which he tried to convey the vast stretches of prairie the party had crossed.

TUCKERMAN REPORTED that Deas flourished in his professional life in St. Louis. "From his own testimony," said Tuckerman, "he has there found all that a painter can desire in the patronage of friends and general sympathy and appreciation." In addition to exhibiting at the Mechanics' Fairs and joining their institute, Deas was listed in the St. Louis city directory for 1845 as a "portrait painter" and then again in 1847 as an "artist," with a residence at 97 Chestnut Street.

Deas's primary activity within the art market between 1844 and 1848 was by exhibition, sale, and "distribution" of his pictures at the American Art-Union in New York. In ten exhibitions between 1839 and 1850 Deas was represented by about fifteen pictures, eleven of which were purchased by the Art-Union and then awarded by lottery to members at the end of each year.

The artist's first great success at the Art-Union came in 1844, with the exhibition of his first western picture there, *Long Jakes* [page 18]. According to the critic for the *Broadway Journal*, *Long Jakes*, also called "Jacques," caused a "sensation among the audience" at the December distribution. The popularity of *Long Jakes* lay in its appealing vision of the western hero as a wild man with a core of urbane chivalry. *Long Jakes* was "from the outer verge of our civilization" and ap-

A Group of Sioux (1845)

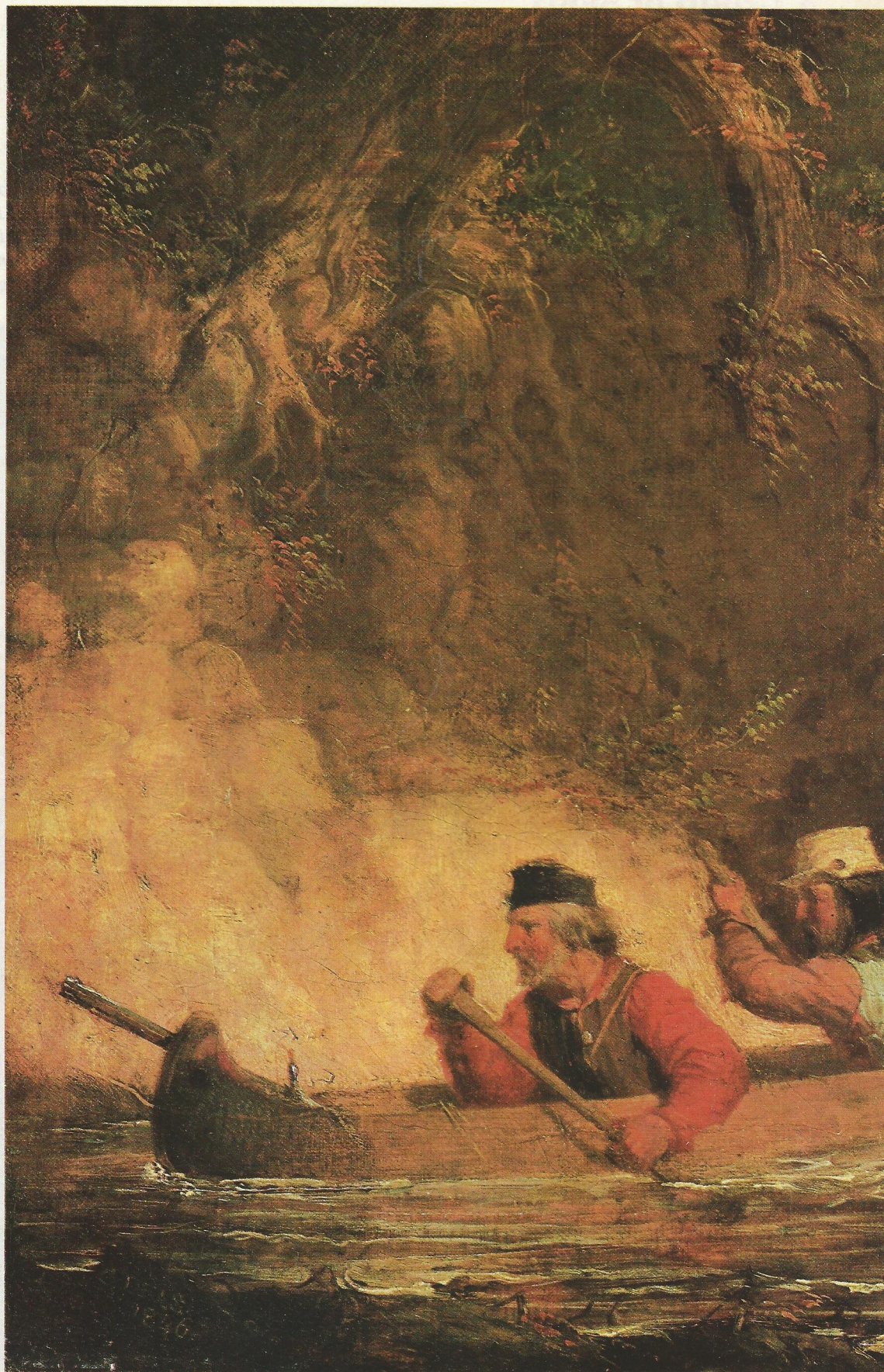
For several years during the 1840s Deas worked out of St. Louis, Missouri, achieving considerable success by exhibiting his works at Mechanics' Fairs there and by marketing some paintings through the American Art-Union in New York. In 1846 author Charles Lanman visited Deas in St. Louis, noting that "he makes this city his head-quarters, but annually spends a few

months among the Indian tribes, familiarizing himself with their manners and customs, and he is honorably identifying himself with the history and scenery of a most interesting portion of the continent." One of Deas's canvases from this period is *A Group of Sioux*, a somewhat fanciful interpretation based on the artist's experiences among the Plains Indians.



The Voyageurs (1846)

The romantic life of French trappers and fur traders inspired several Deas paintings: this dramatic scene of voyageurs descending a rapids impressed a St. Louis viewer as being "true to life" and "wild and picturesque as nature itself in the solitary regions of the west."





The Voyageurs (1845)

Completed a year before the work on the previous pages, this painting also celebrates the adventurous life of the then fast-disappearing fur trader. "By birth he is half French, and half Indian," wrote Charles Lanman, who encountered men like those portrayed by Deas, "but in habits, manners, and education, a full-blooded Indian . . . He belongs to a race which is entirely distinct from all others on the globe."



peared "wild and romantic" noted the writer; yet "there are traits of former gentleness and refinement in his countenance, and he sits upon his horse as though he were fully conscious of his picturesque appearance."

Reproduced as an engraving in an 1846 issue of *New York Illustrated Magazine*, Deas's painting inspired an emotional essay by Henry William Herbert, which celebrated "the glorious, the free, the untrammelled sense of individual will and independent power" that *Long Jakes* symbolized. Herbert chronicled the mountain man's heroic capture of his wild stallion, a creature as noble as his master, and praised the hero's independence in a democratic age "when individuality and personal characteristics and personal influence are yielding everywhere to the pre-eminence of the masses." Jakes's attire was perfect, according to Herbert, "everything here is real, useful, yet how showy, and how more than romantic." The American public and critics of 1845 embraced the potential of *Long Jakes* for narrative embellishment and as a political symbol of independence, and they elevated Deas to a new position of prominence in New York and in St. Louis.

The character of "The Rocky Mountain man," as *Long Jakes* was subtitled in the Art-Union catalogue, came not only from "the outer verge of our civilization," but also from an earlier moment in American history. By 1844 the price of beaver pelts had declined and settlers had begun to invade the territory, and the brief heyday of the mountain man had passed. But his apotheosis survived. The publication of Washington Irving's *Astoria* in 1836 and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* the next year further fixed the mountain man as a popular literary character. Deas may have read these accounts. He also may have noted John C. Frémont's return to St. Louis in the summer of 1844 after more than a year of far-reaching exploration in the West. Certainly by 1845, when Frémont's report was published, the trapper was even more firmly set in the national imagination.

Deas's entry in the 1845 Art-Union exhibition, *The Indian Guide*, "whose prototype was a venerable Shawnee who accompanied Major Wharton," elicited another response from the *Broadway Journal*'s critic, who singled out Deas as "excepting [William Sidney] Mount . . . the most purely American in his feelings of any painter that we have produced." His pictures, said the critic, had "an air of genuineness that impressed you with the feeling of truth." The review went on to define the special appeal of the mountain man poised between a savage state and civilization: "Pictures of pure savage life, like those by Mr. Catlin, cannot excite our sympathies as strongly as do the representations of beings who belong to our own race. The Indian stands at an impassible remove from civilization, but the half-breed forms a connecting link between the white and red races; we feel a sympathy for the Indian guide that we never could for the painted savage, for we see that he has a tincture of our own blood, and his trappings show that he has taken one step toward refinement and civilized life."

ALTHOUGH DEAS CHOSE the life of the half-breed and the pioneer for several of his works in the next few years, he did not abandon the Indian as a subject. Indeed, in 1845, he painted *A Group of Sioux* [page 25], a small, intricately composed picture, serene in some components but tense as a whole.

That Deas understood Sioux culture is evident in such details as his depiction of the typical Sioux hairstyle, bullet pouch, and trade items, notably blankets and striped cloth shirts; the gun on the ground is also authentic. Yet anomalies appear as well. The helmet is not typically Sioux, and pipe smoking would occur more usually in camp, not on the trail. Mysterious and enigmatic but clearly narrative in its intention, *A Group of Sioux* is a somewhat fanciful interpretation based on Deas's experiences among the Plains Indians.

To judge by Deas's extant paintings and from the titles and descriptions of lost works, 1845 was a productive year that witnessed the reappearance of the artist's popular mountain man, now in deadly combat with an Indian: *The Death Struggle* [page 32].

Washington Irving, through Bonneville's voice, had earlier recounted the "courage, fortitude, and perseverance of the pioneers of the fur trade, who . . . first broke their way through a wilderness . . . [of the] most dreary and desolate mountains, and barren and trackless waste, uninhabited by man, or occasionally infested by predatory and cruel savages." Indians "beset every defile, laid ambuscades in their path, or attacked them in their night encampments." The implied tension and anticipated action of *A Group of Sioux* has, in *The Death Struggle*, broken loose as a mounted trapper and his Indian adversary plunge off a cliff to certain death.

On exhibition in the late summer of 1845 as the "last arrival at the Rooms of the Art-Union," *The Death Struggle* attracted the immediate and devoted attention of critics for the *Anglo American* and the *Broadway Journal*. With language suited to the dramatic horror of the painting, each spun out a narrative for *The Death Struggle*. According to the *Broadway Journal*, "A Trapper has been found trespassing upon the Indian hunting ground" and in the ensuing fight for the beaver, still in its trap, both Indian and mountain man are wounded; their horses, legs entangled in vines and "maddened by the wounds which have been dealt out alike to man and beast, break from the control of their riders, and rush headlong towards a frightful precipice."

The critic continues: "On, on, speed the horses; wilder and wilder they grow in their flight—the height is gained—without let or pause over they go! Man and beast food for the Buzzards! But no! their downward progress is arrested by a boldly jutting rock."

So arrested, even momentarily, the bearded trapper's eyes flash in horror, and his hand, holding the knife, clutches at a dead branch above. With the other hand he still holds the beaver, which viciously bites the Indian's arm. This horrific scene is observed from above by the Indian's companion, who strains for a better look. The color red appears throughout the picture, from the trap-

Events suggest an immediate source for Deas's growing preoccupation with the drama of pursuit—the demons raging within the mind of the artist.

per's crimson shirt to the Indians' painted faces and the blood on men and animals alike—even snorted from the nostrils of the Indian's mount. The sky, suitably dark and stormy, heightens the drama.

AFTER 1845 AND DEAS'S SUCCESS in New York, the St. Louis newspapers began to recognize his growing prominence. He was commended for his annual contributions to the Mechanics' Fair, and the new *Weekly Reveille* credited "repeated and brilliant proofs of his high standing as an artist."

Simultaneously, another artist began to attract attention in Deas's adopted city. By 1844 George Caleb Bingham had returned to St. Louis after a three-year stay in Washington, D.C., and sent four paintings for exhibition at the 1845 Art-Union. Among them was one now titled *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*. Bingham called this river picture *French Trader and Half-Breed Son*, thereby drawing attention to the *voyageurs* on the Missouri, the subject of a similar painting by Deas the same year, and one that may in fact have served as inspiration for Bingham.

The lives of traders of French descent, who often intermarried with Indians, sharply contrasted with those of American trappers or mountain men, whose independence Deas had celebrated in *Long Jakes*. Often shown in family groups, the *voyageurs*, as they were known, usually acquired furs through trade with Indians rather than by trapping the beaver themselves. They traveled along the Missouri in dugouts, transporting the furs from trading posts in the wilderness to markets like St. Louis and carrying merchandise back to the posts.

By the time Deas and Bingham painted the *voyageurs*, these frontier figures had all but disappeared from the more highly commercialized and, at the time, declining fur trade. The *voyageurs* were regarded as romantic characters by Charles Lanman, who typified those he encountered in the summer of 1846: "By birth he is half French, and half Indian, but in habits, manners, and education, a full-blooded Indian His dress is something less than half civilized, and his knowledge of the world equal to that of his savage brethren;—amiable, even to a fault, but intemperate and without a religion He belongs to a race which is entirely distinct from all others on the globe."

Bingham suspended his fur traders on the placid river at dawn; laden with furs and live and dead game, they are poised between savage and civilized life in a completely masculine world. In Deas's *The Voyageurs* [page 28], the Indian wife who is only implied in Bingham's painting completes the family picture, along with a baby and other children. Although similarly composed, the two works present different moods of the Far West.

Bingham's trappers regard us with mild interest or amusement, while Deas's *voyageurs* are much more intent on negotiating treacherous waters and preparing for the impending storm.

Deas's bearded patriarch, in typical beaver hat, controls the dugout from its stern as his eldest son, who has just caught the fish seen behind him, poles the boat forward with his spear. On its stern the dugout is inscribed "St. Pierre," which suggests its owner's French origin as well as the possibility that the family may have come from the St. Peters River post in the vicinity of Fort Snelling, which Deas had visited. The artist intensified the isolation of the French trapper's family by posing them against a forbidding sky, an ominous bank of craggy rocks, and a blasted tree trunk with only a few autumn leaves clinging to it.

At about this same time Deas painted a watercolor of *The Trapper and his Family*, which, almost identical to *The Voyageurs*, must be seen as a study or close variant. In 1846 he painted the subject once again [pages 26-27] and exhibited the work at the National Academy of Design in 1847. The critic for the St. Louis *Weekly Reveille* admired the picture as being "wild and picturesque as nature itself in the solitary regions of the west."

Of the pictures Charles Lanman found in Deas's studio in the summer of 1846, two affirmed the artist's concern for the history and present of the American West. As the St. Louis papers carried reports of the Mexican War, Deas painted the daring escape of Texas hero Captain Samuel H. Walker from death at the hands of a Mexican *ranchero*. *The Last Shot* (now lost) appeared at the Art-Union in 1847 and, unlike *The Voyageurs*, exhibited at the National Academy of Design that year, or *The Oregon Pioneers* (now lost), shown at the Art-Union the year before, both of which met with some criticism, this picture was judged to possess "all the force, boldness and freedom of drawing and color characteristic of this artist's works." The picture must have been fierce indeed, as the critic for the *Literary World* warned the potential owner that "the horror of the picture would curdle all the milk of human kindness in his breast," would "haunt him like a night-mare," and would "destroy . . . his peace of mind forever."

Deas exhibited his last major painting, *Prairie Fire* [page 31], at the 1847 Mechanics' Fair. Two months later, he left St. Louis for the East, never to return.

Prairie Fire was admired in St. Louis by "a Correspondent" for the *Literary World*, who thought it "the best to our mind which we have had from the easel of Deas The figures represent an old hunter on his horse, whose face, and grey beard, and hair, tell the tale of many a hardy adventure through which he has passed. Riding by his side and seated on a noble animal

Prairie Fire (1847)

The western prairies were, in the words of writer Lewis F. Thomas, “gloriously beautiful or awfully terrible,” and Charles Deas’s choice of a prairie fire as the theme for what was to be his last major work perfectly suited a romantic artist of the far West. Yet, with its frenzied horses and sense of impending doom, the painting provides disturbing clues to Deas’s changing mental state: in 1848 he would be committed to an asylum.





“Yet his talent even when manifest in the vagaries of a diseased mind, was often effective . . .”

Deas's horrific vision of wilderness combat in

The Death Struggle (opposite), painted in about 1845, drew intense interest from critics and was praised for its “bold, daring energy.”

is another figure, the most prominent of the picture, clasping in his arms a young girl, to whom he is betrothed, and supposed to be the daughter of the old hunter. She rests apparently exhausted in the arms of her lover, her hair dishevelled and streaming in the wind. Behind them furiously rages the burning prairie; and one can almost imagine that he hears the crackling of the dry grass beneath the resistless flames. They have just reached a small stream, and are supposed to have gained a place of safety.”

The subject of prairies on fire perfectly suited a romantic artist of the Far West. A fearsome and spectacular autumn phenomenon, the conflagrations did not escape the notice of travelers or of novelists who wrote about the West. Lewis F. Thomas, whose portrait Deas had painted and for whose books he had provided the sources of illustrations, graphically described the annual burning of the prairies, caused either by accident or deliberately by hunters to flush out game:

“If the wind chances to be high, tufts of the burning material dart like flaming meteors through the air, and, far as the eye can reach, a pall of black smoke stretches to the horizon and overhangs the scene, while all below is lighted up, and blazing with furious intensity, and ever and anon, flaming whisks of grass flash up, revolving and circling in the glowing atmosphere, and lending to the imagination, a semblance of convict-spirits tossing in a lake of fire.”

The frenzy, sense of impending doom, and melodrama of *Prairie Fire* are qualities seen with increasing frequency in Deas's later paintings. Subsequent events suggest an immediate source for this preoccupation with the drama of pursuit: the demons raging within the mind of the artist. In the summer of 1848, soon after his arrival in New York City from Newport, Rhode Island, Deas was judged insane and committed to an asylum. The career of this artist of “early genius and bright promise” thus ended before he was thirty years old.

BY THE SUMMER OF 1848, news of Deas's hospitalization had reached the papers in St. Louis. Quoting an article from the *New York Express*, the *Daily Missouri Republican* attributed the cause of his illness “to a settled melancholy and an unnecessary anxiety about the new science of *magnetism*.” Interest in “animal magnetism”—mesmerism or hypnosis—was reported widely in the St. Louis papers while Deas lived there, as were such incidents as the “cataleptic state” one poor

victim entered after an improper “magnetism.” Akin to the exorcism of demons, yet with purported scientific basis, magnetism fascinated Deas's fellow painter, William Sidney Mount, who wrote that “In mesmerism there is a sympathy so perfect between the magnetizer and the subject that what he sees, the subject sees.” Magnetism faded during the 1840s, but not before Deas had come into contact with it.

Deas titled his last picture to appear at the National Academy of Design, in 1849, *A Vision* (now lost). The critic for the *Knickerbocker* described it: “human sufferers” consumed by “winding serpents” with “fangs so wild, so horrible.” The critic was astonished by the “beauty and delicacy of the handling, and the correctness of drawing” in so awful a subject, and concluded, “A ‘vision’ is it? Yes, and a horrid one! Despair and Death are together, and Frenzy glares from the blood red sockets of the victims, and haunting weird thoughts arise, as we reflect over this singular effort of talent.”

To his biographical sketch of Deas, first published in 1846, Tuckerman added, in his 1867 *Book of the Artists*, a paragraph about Deas's derangement and his visionary pictures. “Yet his talent even when manifest in the vagaries of a diseased mind, was often effective; one of his wild pictures, representing a black sea, over which a figure hung, suspended by a ring, while from the waves a monster was springing, was so horrible, that a sensitive artist fainted at the sight.”

Daniel Huntington regarded Deas as of “naturally nervous and sensitive temperament;” an acquaintance in St. Louis later remarked that Deas had been “of a somewhat melancholy disposition, or temperament. Perhaps the malady that finally overwhelmed him was of slow growth. Probably, also, he had a hard struggle to maintain himself, as painters were but poorly remunerated in St. Louis when he lived there; and this may have had a depressing affect [sic] upon his spirit.”

After the artist's death from apoplexy at New York's Bloomingdale Asylum for the Insane on March 23, 1867, Daniel Huntington, president of the National Academy of Design, mourned Deas as an associate member who had “early distinguished himself by characteristic pictures of wild border life” and whose latest pictures “reflected the strange dreams of a distempered brain.”

Temperamentally predisposed and overwhelmed by his circumstances, Charles Deas painted evidence of his spirit throughout his career in scenes of perceived danger, alarm, and flight. ★

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Babe Didrikson: America's Greatest Athlete?

by Joseph Gustaitis

THE TEAM THAT WON the National Women's Amateur Athletic Union [AAU] track meet in 1932 beat the second-place Illinois Women's Athletic Club, 30-22. The Illinois Women's Athletic Club had twenty-two members. The winning team had *one*.

She was a rangy, square-jawed, sandy-haired twenty-one-year-old Texan named Mildred Ella Didrikson, known as "Babe," and she was probably the greatest athletic phenomenon ever seen in America.

Babe Didrikson's list of achievements is nearly too long to comprehend—or believe. At the AAU championships in 1931, she won eight of nine events, finishing second only in the shotput. At the Los Angeles Olympics the following year, where women competitors were limited to a maximum of three events, she set three world records (though the judges disqualified her winning high jump due to her "unorthodox" style—one that is legal today). She broke the world javelin record there by an incredible *eleven* feet.

Babe was twice selected an All-American in women's basketball. She could heave a football fifty yards and rifle a baseball farther than many major leaguers—she once made a 313-foot throw from center field to home plate. She pitched in exhibitions with the St. Louis Cardinals. In swimming she missed the world record for one hundred yards by one second. As America's leading golfer, she won an unheard-of seventeen straight tournaments in one year.

She played tennis, soccer, and lacrosse, and won prizes in figure skating. She could fence, bowl, and dive, and in an exhibition boxing match she split lightweight fighter Bill Stribling's lip. She gave billiard exhibitions, was an accomplished gin rummy player, danced superbly, played the harmonica professionally, and typed one hundred words per minute.

Some athletes have strength, some have speed, some have exquisite coordination. No one—except "the Babe"—has ever seemingly had every kind of athletic skill, *plus* intensity. It was a gift so complete that it was eerie. And it was all crammed into a five-foot-six-and-one-half-inch package weighing about 125 pounds.

The daughter of Norwegian immigrants, Didrikson was born in Port Arthur, Texas, on June 26, 1911, and grew up in nearby Beaumont. She was a tough Texas tomboy, and some say she got the tag "Babe" from her prodigious home runs. Her skills were first publicly displayed on a high school girls' basketball team,

where she was spotted by Colonel Melvin J. McCombs, a scout for the Employers Casualty Company. Few colleges then offered serious womens' sports programs, and the slack was taken up by public-relations-minded corporations that sponsored women's teams.

Colonel McCombs saw a winner in Babe and was not disappointed. He signed her for his Golden Cyclones Athletic Club, and she dropped out of high school. She took her basketball team to the national championship and led the squad in the AAU track and field championships, where her prodigious feats woke up sportswriters everywhere. By 1932, following Didrikson's record-breaking Olympic performance, all America was aware that a phenomenon had arrived. The Depression-racked, glamour-starved public loved to hear Babe's dusty Texas drawl as she uttered brash, down-home things such as "Folks say that I go about winning these athletic games because I have the cooperation thing that has to do with eye, mind, and muscle. That sure is a powerful lot of language to use about a girl from Texas, maybe they are right about it. All I know is that I can run and I can jump and I can toss things and when they fire a gun or tell me to get busy I just say to myself, 'Well, kid, here's where you've got to win another.' And I usually do." With a confidence bordering arrogance, she infuriated her competitors while delighting her fans.

By 1932 Didrikson was a celebrity of Lindberghian stature, but she found, as many great women athletes have, that life after the Olympics can be a confusing anticlimax. She worked up an embarrassing eighteen-minute vaudeville routine in which she sang "I'm Fit as a Fiddle and Ready for Love," ran on a treadmill, and played the harmonica. She gave billiard exhibitions, went on a basketball tour with "Babe Didrikson's All Americans," and pitched with the House of David baseball team, a curious period phenomenon that (with the exception of Babe) had all bearded players.

Although Babe made a great deal of money, the accomplished sportswoman must have found such jobs a little demeaning. Fortunately, her skills included the ability to smack a golf ball farther than most men, and she soon focused exclusively on that sport.

The postwar years saw Babe's greatest success as a golfer, including the string of seventeen consecutive victories that was capped by her conquest of the Brit-

UPI/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS



ish Ladies Amateur tournament, where she was the first winner from America. A magnetic presence on the links, Babe kidded the spectators and teased her competitors, and more than any other person she was responsible for laying the foundation for today's professional women's golf tour.

As a youth Babe had scorned all things feminine and was the first to admit that she was no beauty. "I know I'm not pretty," she once said, "but I do try to be graceful." Sportswriters joked about whether she used the men's or women's locker room, and when she was asked if there was anything she *did not* play, she said, "Yeah, *dolls*." But after the Olympics Didrikson allowed her feminine side to emerge. She let her hair grow, began to wear makeup and skirts, put on some weight that filled out her figure, and became more comfortable with who and what she was. Then she found George Zaharias, a fun-loving, well-muscled, well-off professional wrestler, who was about the only kind of man who could impress Babe. They met at the Los Angeles Open golf tourney in 1938, married the same year, and enjoyed a successful partnership in which George shrewdly managed Babe's career and finances.

One would think that a specimen like Babe, with her strength and zest, would outlive us all. But in one of nature's cruel ironies she was destined to be cut down in the prime of life. Ten days after winning the Babe Zaharias golf tournament in 1953, she underwent surgery for cancer. Just three-and-one-half months later she was competing again, and in 1954, despite her illness, she won the National Women's Open by an astonishing twelve strokes. Although Zaharias had to be hospitalized again in 1955, she optimistically kept her golf clubs propped up in the corner of her room. The physicians could not believe that she remained alive, but it took time for death to conquer her incredible physique. She finally died, with great courage, on September 27, 1956.

Sportswriters being professionally committed to hyperbole, there is every reason to cock an eyebrow at the declaration of many that Mildred Didrikson Zaharias was the greatest athlete, male or female, ever to sprint upon the earth. But as "the Babe" herself might have said, "Who's the competition?" ★

Emmy-Award-winning television writer Joseph Gustaitis lives in Brooklyn, New York.



POWELL
AND
MARKET

HYDE BEACH
FISHERMANS
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13

"I stop at
the
St. Francis"

The cable car was invented in San Francisco, and the city by the Golden Gate is now the last refuge for this fascinating relic of the Industrial Revolution.

The Bells Still Toll for San Francisco's Hills

by Billy C. Lewis

STANDING AT THE BOTTOM of San Francisco's Nob Hill one winter evening in 1869, Andrew S. Hallidie watched a horse struggling to pull a streetcar up the steep grade. Hallidie was moved by the cruelty and hardships endured by the streetcar horses, which had a life-expectancy of only about four-and-a-half years. He wondered how his knowledge of cable mechanics could be used to improve transportation in this city of impossible hills. The precipitous slopes of the San Francisco peninsula presented a formidable challenge.

Hallidie was just the man to meet this challenge. His background in

cable mechanics soon led him to invent the world's first working cable streetcar line. With his invention, efficient travel up and down San Francisco's steeply-graded hills became possible.

Hallidie had grown up engulfed in mechanical sciences. Born in London in 1836, he had arrived in California in 1852 with his inventor-engineer father and learned the engineering trade at various machine and wire rope businesses owned by the family. After attempting a short stint as a gold-digger in the Sierra, Hallidie returned to his profession by completing a two-hundred-foot suspension viaduct across the middle fork of the American River. By the 1860s he had formed A.S. Hallidie and Company in San Francisco, specializing in making wire cables for tramways, buildings, mining operations, and suspension river crossings.

Motorized public transportation had probably first appeared on the west coast in 1860 with the introduction of a steam-powered streetcar. Though it was more powerful than horse-drawn street vehicles, the steam car was noisy, unwieldy, and cumbersome—qualities that quickly

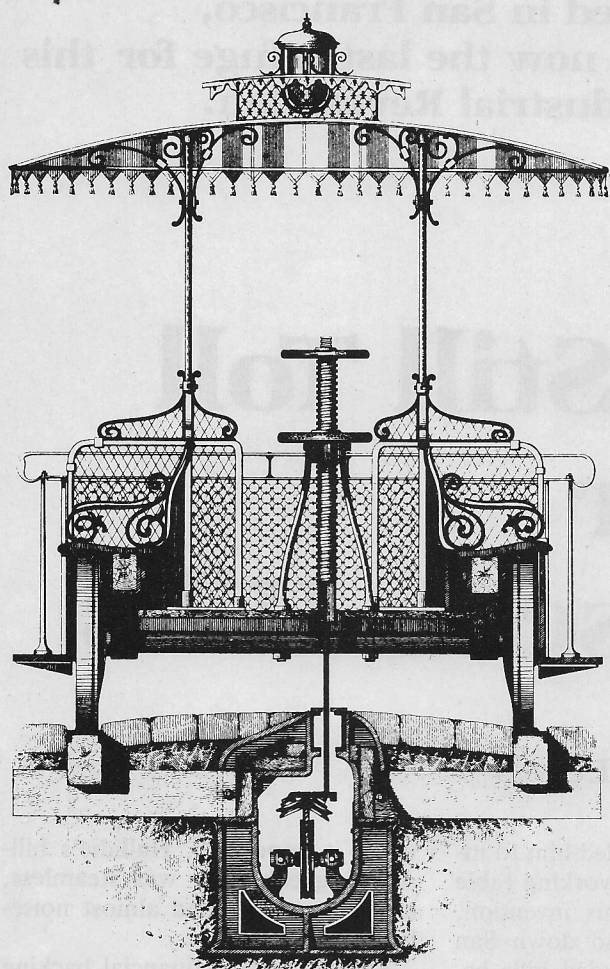
made it unpopular. Hallidie's hill-climbing cable car was seamless, nonexcremental, and almost noiseless.

Due to lack of financial backing for the cable car project, Hallidie eventually purchased the bulk of stocks in his line. After six months of construction, Hallidie and his partners Henry L. Davis, James Moffitt, and Joseph Britton were ready to present San Francisco with its first cable street line. Compared to later cable car standards it was a rather simple affair—only 2,791 feet of track propelling cars at four miles per hour. The trip took about eleven minutes one way.

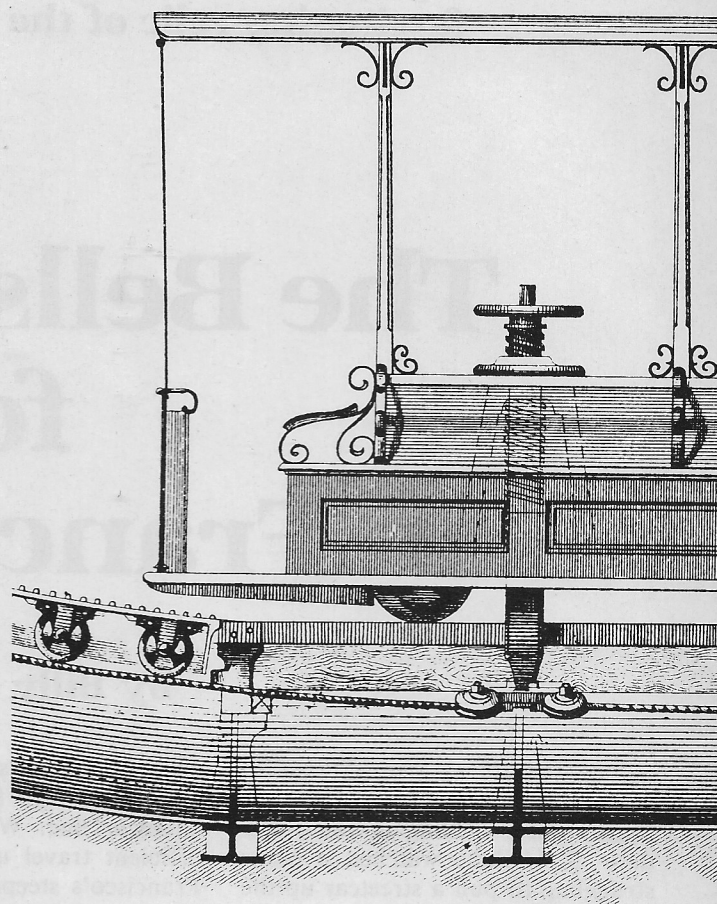
Hallidie's system was successful because travel did not depend upon the weight of the vehicle for positive traction. Cable in constant motion provided a downward pull on the car and made climbing a natural act.

Taking every precaution against a public failure, Hallidie and a group of close friends met before dawn on August 2, 1873, at the bottom of Clay Street Hill for a trial run. Later that day a test would be conducted before a crowd of bystanders and local officials—Mayor William Al-

Literally held to its course by a steel grip, a cable car of San Francisco's Powell-Hyde Street Line seemingly teeters near the crest of Russian Hill, en route to the city center from the Fisherman's Wharf/Aquatic Park area. More than a century after their inception, San Francisco's cable cars still navigate the city's precipitous hills better than any other form of public transportation.



Engravings from a brochure for the Cable Railway Company illustrate the inner workings of the world's first cable car system. A cross-sectional view (above) shows the screw-action grip that connected the car to a moving cable encased in a conduit under the street. The two-unit vehicle (right) consisted of an open "dummy," seating about ten passengers, and an attached passenger car, carrying about a dozen more.



vord, Chief of Police Patrick Crowley, Fire Chief David Scannell, and Sheriff James Adams—who wanted to “see if the damned thing worked.”

During the “official” run, a broken belt connecting the grip to the car frame caused a twenty-minute delay, and at the last minute the line’s first official gripman, Thomas P. Burns, lost his nerve. Yielding to

the pleas of his wife and children, he refused to drive the frail-looking streetcar [actually a two-unit vehicle; see illustration above] up Clay Street. Hallidie then boarded the “dummy,” as the grip car was called, twisted the center-mounted screw-type grip, and the little cars lurched forward on their historic run. The crowd jumped aboard and within moments ninety adventurers were hanging, sitting, standing and attaching themselves by any means possible to the dummy and passenger car as they made their way to the top of the hill. The trial run was an even greater success than Hallidie had hoped; his cars had been designed to carry only thirty passengers.

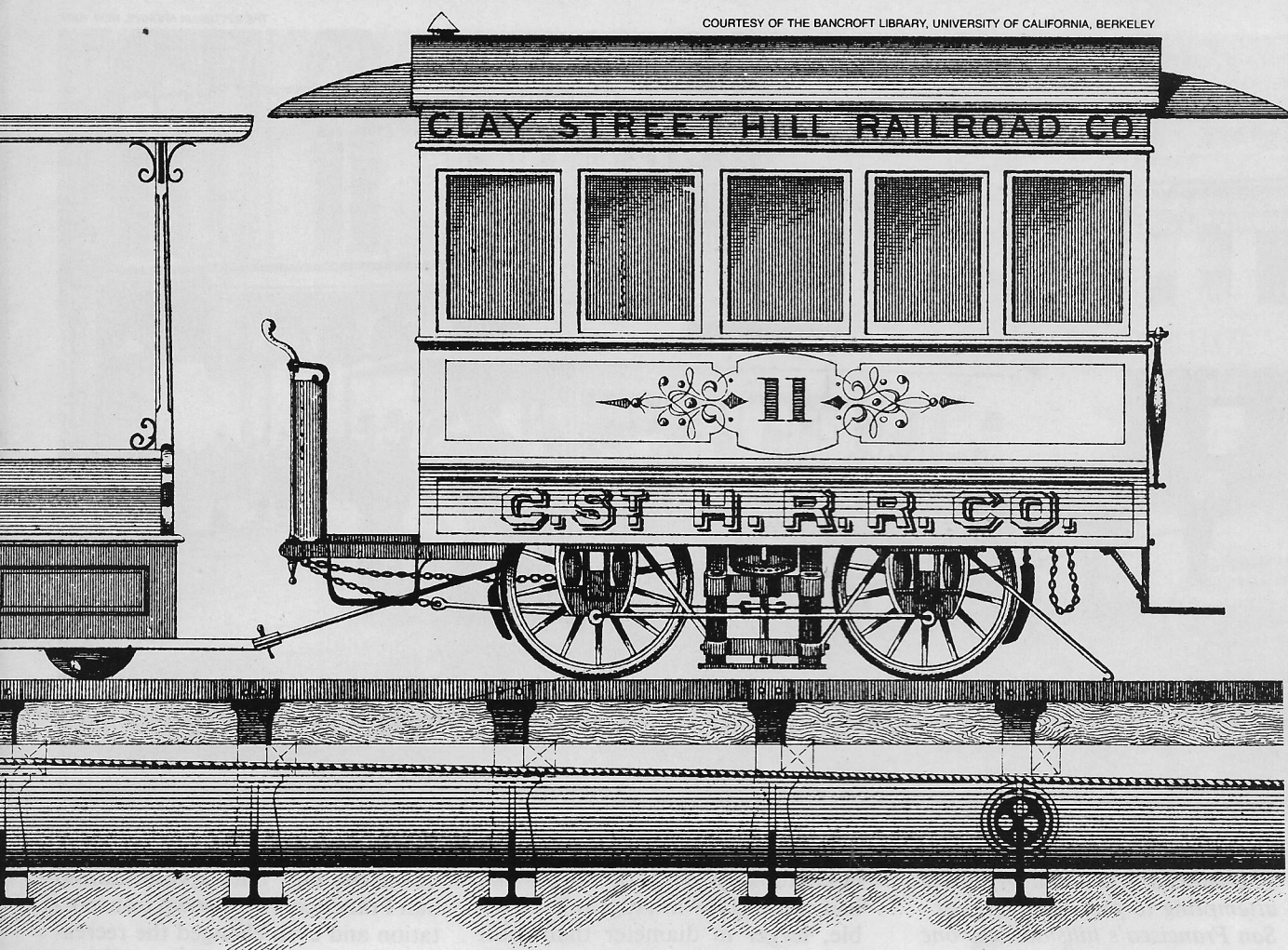
Hallidie’s invention earned him about \$3,000 a month from five-cent fares and prompted further cable car enterprises. Leland Stanford, former governor of California and a member of the Central Pacific Railway’s “Big Four,” soon fol-

lowed in the cable car business and, like Hallidie, had to purchase a large percentage of his company’s stock.

Stanford hired Henry Root, an engineer from Vermont, to “come and study up on the idea.” Root was given all the time and money necessary to build San Francisco’s most advanced and up-to-date cable car line, characterized by mechanical innovations, luxury, safety, and convenience.

To accomplish this task Stanford would have to infringe upon patents held by Hallidie, who had legal rights to a wide range of cable car designs. But that did not stop Stanford, a man who was used to getting what he wanted. Upon Hallidie’s request to be paid a consultation fee of \$40,000 for the use of his patents,

Suggested additional reading: The Cable Car in America by George W. Hilton (Howell-North Books, 1982).



Stanford wrote back "If I undertake to build the California Street Road I am going to be the one to determine what plans will be used and if our lawyers say that we are infringing on patents we will pay, if we must, for the privilege of using them." (Hallidie later received \$30,000 from Stanford, following legal action.) The only contact between Hallidie and Stanford from that point on was made through their lawyers and was usually in regard to legal matters concerning the cable lines.

THE CABLE CAR has been compared technologically to the elevator and ski lift, with the primary difference being that the streetcar is capable of connecting and releasing itself from the cable. The grip, the primary focus of design, acts like a giant set of pliers, grabbing the continuously moving cables located in slots beneath the streets. The grip's design depended on what kind of

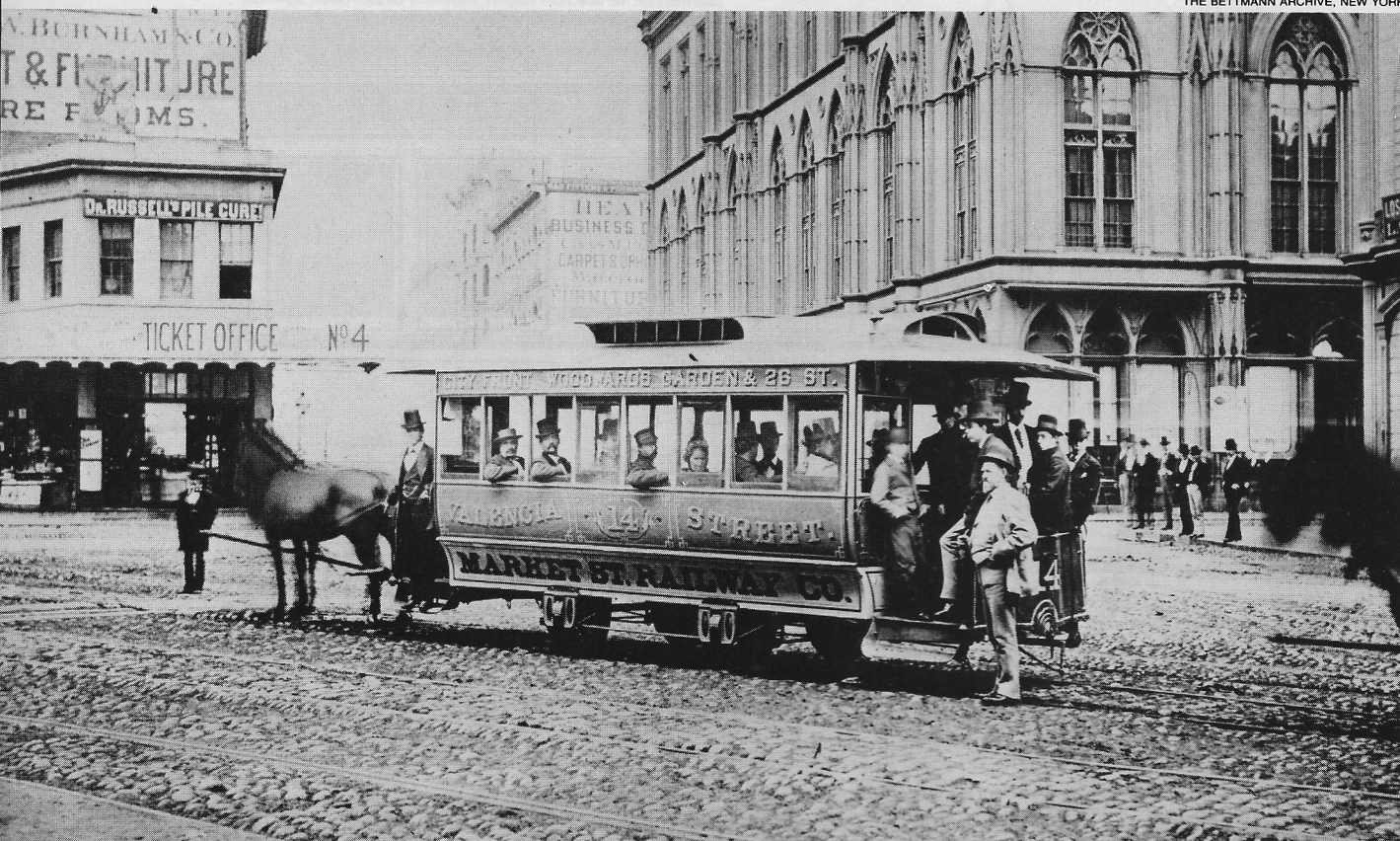
configuration or street pattern the line followed and invariably became the disputed point in patent infringements that sometimes sent streetcar companies into bankruptcy.

The earliest grip was a roller type with four wheels that were squeezed together over the cable. This type of grip proved inefficient and was abandoned by most engineers. The Root grip or side gripping type was the most widely used in the business and became known as the "California type."

Gripping and releasing the cable eventually damaged the line so severely that splices were often necessary to replace broken and badly crimped sections. If gone undetected, a broken strand could cause an accident by causing the vehicle to go out of control. As late as 1971, the Powell Street line in San Francisco came partly unwound and produced a large, coiled tangle of wire that immediately snagged the next

car. The result was a multiple cable car pileup that cost the city \$100,000 in damages to cars and terminal. (In another serious accident, in 1967, more than thirty people were injured and two killed when a Hyde Street cable car smashed into an automobile crossing the line at the bottom of a hill. At the other extreme, there was the woman passenger, injured in a 1964 incident, who sued the Municipal Railway for \$50,000, claiming that the accident had caused her psychological trauma that made her extremely and uncontrollably amorous.)

The engines that supplied power to the cable cars were placed in a centrally located powerhouse. Parts for the stationary steam engines could be easily ordered from a catalogue. Most cable engines ranged from two hundred to fifteen hundred horsepower. The general rule to determine optimum engine size for a system was four horsepower for every thousand feet of cable. The ran-



The hardships endured by horses attempting to pull streetcars up San Francisco's hillsides was one of the motivating factors that led Andrew S. Hallidie to create the world's first cable car in 1873. Horse-drawn cars continued to operate on the more level areas of San Francisco: the one above was photographed at Market, Post, and Montgomery streets in 1880.

dom gripping and releasing of cars on the line required compound engines that could produce a constantly changing output of power to provide a constant speed for the cables. Lurching due to the gripping and ungripping of other cars on the cable was further minimized by speed-regulating governors on the engines.

By the mid-1890s the growing presence of electricity made it possible to switch from steam engines to electric motors. The electric motors produced smoother torque which was mechanically easier on grips and cables.

A cable car line's first cable instal-

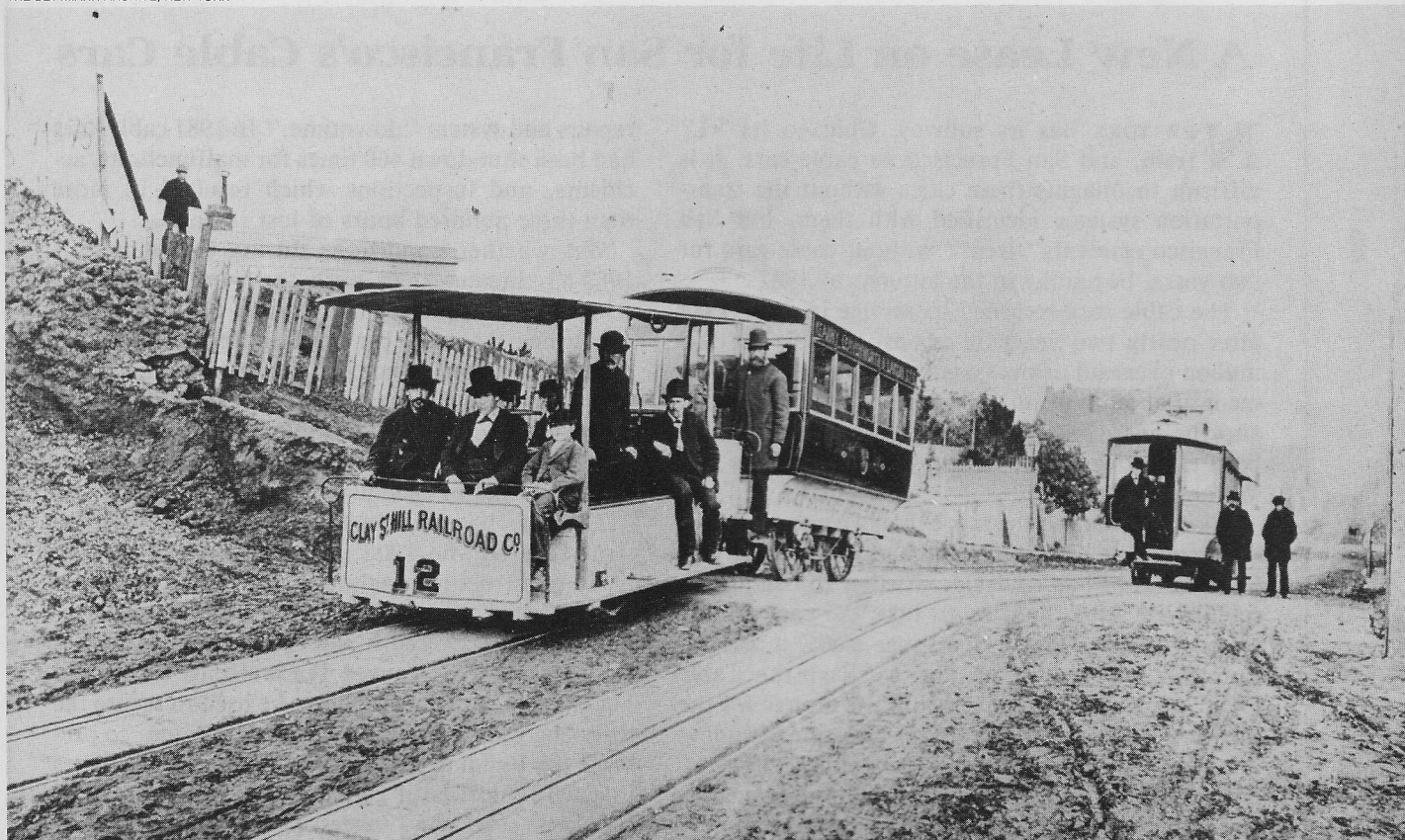
lation took on the air of a circus that had come to town. Huge rolls of cable, larger in diameter than most men are tall, cost between \$6,000 and \$7,500 for twenty-five thousand feet. When the cables arrived by freight train or ship, special tackle and gear were used to hoist the spool of cable onto a sturdy, flat-bed wagon pulled by about a dozen horses. Crowds gathered to watch as another team of horses pulled the cable along the miles of slot. A cable delivery made to the Omnibus Railroad and Cable Company once required fifty-four horses to drag the line from the roll to the powerhouse.

When the cable was finally in the working system, care was taken to insure a long life for the cable. It was said that an expert cable superintendent could predict the complete deterioration of a wire rope within a week or two. A replacement roll was held in reserve near the installed cable. When needed, it was attached to the old cable and unwound off the roll as the original completed its round.

The ability to travel easily up and

down the city hills revolutionized San Francisco's crosstown transportation and even changed the recreational habits of its residents. Wherever a cable car line ventured, the adjacent property and real estate values doubled, even tripled. The once-sparsely-populated hills became sites for Victorian mansions. Places such as the Presidio, the Castle amusement center on Telegraph Hill, Golden Gate Park, and Woodward's Gardens (an amusement park on Mission Street) were made more accessible. Some cable lines had vested interests in special weekend side shows and promoted events such as Professor Baldwin's famous balloon rides and parachute drops at Baker's Beach and the daring Millie Lavelle who, using her teeth to grip a pulley, traveled the entire length of a rope from the Cliff House to Baker's Beach.

THE CABLE CAR WAS SOON viewed as the most economical form of urban transportation, carrying more passengers than a horse-drawn car at twice the speed and half the cost. Systems were installed all over



Hallidie's Clay Street Line (above) was the first of many to spring up in San Francisco during the final decades of the nineteenth century. This photograph was taken in September 1873, about a month after the line's inauguration.

America. Between the years 1882 and 1893 cable street railways eased transportation problems in twenty-eight major American cities. At its height during the 1890s, the American cable car industry had a total of five hundred miles of track in cities from New York to Seattle. About four million passengers were served annually.

New York City's dense population and north-and-south traffic pattern through Manhattan ideally suited it for cable traction transportation, but the severe winter weather froze lines and often closed the system. Chicago's cable car lines overcame the severe winter conditions through the use of improved tracks that would not close tight when melted snow swelled into ice. During a short period in Chicago's history,

the cable lines carried between seventy thousand and one hundred thousand passengers annually.

Although America had the technology for an electric car at the time cable traction appeared, it was not yet developed enough to compete with cable on steep grades. Fear of electricity also hampered the electric car's progress. Cable traction developers further hindered electric cars when they compared overhead electric power line hazards to the relative safety of underground cables encased in steel and concrete conduits. Industrial experts such as Asa Hovey preached the gospel of the cable car, truly believing that the new rival would never entirely supersede cable lines. It seemed as though cable car systems would be the long-term solution to the nation's urban transportation needs.

The business did prosper for about six years but then declined. Improvements in the electric streetcar made it more economical to operate and equally practical on medium-grade hills. And the high cost of cable installation, \$60,000 to \$100,000 a mile, helped to sound the

death knell of the industry in most parts of the United States and other countries that had ventured into the business. Even in San Francisco, cable lines went through a rapid period of decline and consolidation as public transportation habits shifted to the more reliable electric street trolleys.

Energy efficiency was never readily associated with cable car technology, and it was only by comparison to the horse-drawn cars that any sort of argument existed for their use. In 1884 a study by San Francisco engineers, printed in the official publication of the Technical Society of the Pacific Coast, showed that 68 percent of the power required by local cable companies was used to move the cable and 28 percent to move the cars. And all of this energy was used just to transport the remaining 4 percent representing passenger weight.

The end of the heyday for San Francisco's cable cars was hastened by the great earthquake and fire that hit northern California early in the morning of April 18, 1906. The first shock paralyzed the huge cable

A New Lease on Life for San Francisco's Cable Cars

NEW YORK has its subway, Chicago its "L" train, and San Francisco its cable cars. It is difficult to imagine these cities without the transportation systems identified with them, but San Francisco residents "went" without cable cars for two years, beginning in the autumn of 1982.

The cable cars returned to service in June 1984 after nearly two years of reconstruction. The \$60 million overhaul of the system included the replacement of about nine miles of cable track and conduit and the near-complete reconstruction of the cable barn and powerhouse at the corner of Mason and Washington streets.

Five years earlier, the more than a century-old cable system had deteriorated so badly that the city of San Francisco had to decide whether to completely rebuild the cable lines or to take the cars off the streets forever. After a three-year study, a restoration plan was drawn up and a "Save the Cable Cars" campaign started to help raise money for the project. Only one major obstacle remained: finding a way to tear up sixty-nine blocks of heavily traveled streets without completely disrupting the city's normal business operations. The problem was solved by geographically dividing the undertaking into five coordinated construction projects and working under an accelerated schedule from October 4, 1982, to June 1, 1984, so as to finish before the National Democratic Convention and summer tourist season.

The San Francisco cable car lines are registered as National Historic Landmarks, and it was necessary to copy the original system as accurately as possible. And by restoring the system to its nineteenth-century likeness, residents hoped to preserve a beloved city tradition.

At first planners thought that the cars themselves would need little more than paint and polish. But it soon became evident that far more than a face-lift was required. About \$2 million went into upgrading the cars' electrical systems from the old-style, six volt networks to twelve volts, and replacing parts such as axles, light fixtures, woodwork, benches, emergency brakes, and all forms of brightwork.

Cable tracks along the California, Powell-Mason, and Powell-Hyde lines were removed and replaced with continuous-length welded railway resting on long-life Teflon pads to give a smoother ride than had been possible on the old-styled segmented rails. The cable conduit below the streets was replaced by concrete structures reinforced by steel ribbing. Over many years the shifting earth had displaced many parts of the conduit, adding stress to the cable machinery and causing excessive

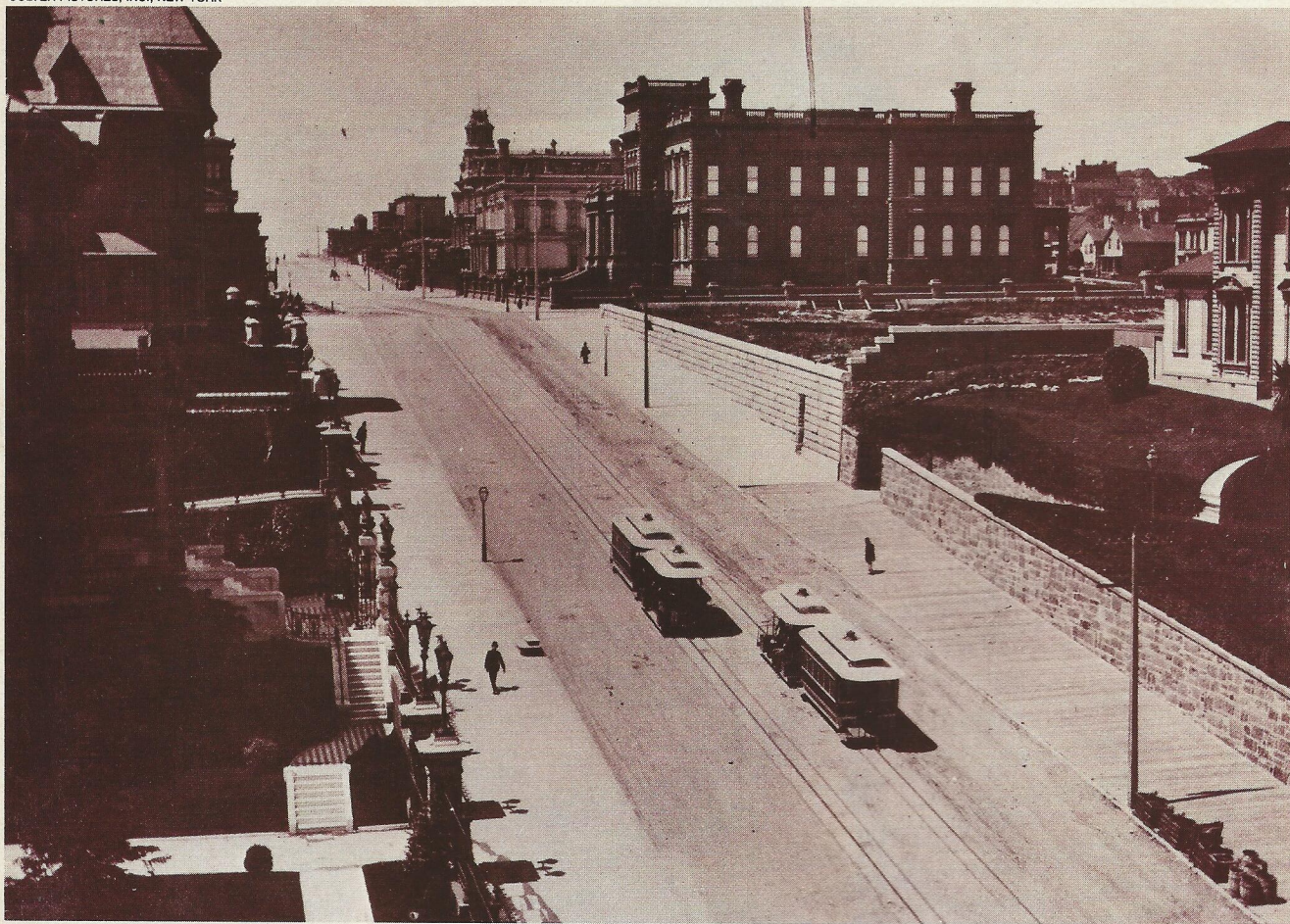
repairs and system "downtime." In 1981 cable lines had been shut down 460 times for malfunctions, accidents, and inspections which resulted in more than three hundred hours of lost revenue.

Wet weather conditions during the winter of 1982-83 threatened to push the work far behind schedule. Consequently, restoration of the building containing the cable car barn and powerhouse began with the roof. Once the workers had this cover to protect them from the elements, they began work inside the building on the cable machinery. The laborers were able to not only make up lost time but to push ahead of schedule.

The barn had been built in 1887 and then reconstructed after the 1906 earthquake and fire. The hasty construction methods used the second time around were not revealed until 1983 when restoration crews discovered it had been rebuilt without a foundation. This caused the walls to crack and buckle, and steel cables had to be used to secure the wavering walls before work could continue. To preserve the building's original brick facade, restorers injected hundreds of gallons of an epoxy adhesive into large cracks and spaces. Saving the facade cost \$2 million and added six months to the project. Total cost of the barn restoration was \$18 million.

While historically correct outside, the cable car barn and museum has a new look inside. Bright, modern overhead fixtures provide better illumination for the museum's exhibits, which include cable car models, illustrations, and a gift shop with a selection of books about San Francisco and its cable system. From a balcony overlooking the power plant, visitors have an excellent view of the cable machinery. Downstairs, a passage leads below street level where one can look through acrylic windows and see a part of the working cable wheels that guide the steel-rope through the system.

The restoration project successfully preserved the nineteenth-century authenticity of the cable-car lines, but it also caused some changes for the better. The system is safer and more reliable than before. Each of the three lines is equipped with its own motors and has access to a backup if needed, so a breakdown on one line won't stop the whole system as it did in the past. The cars are now fitted with standardized parts to make repairs easier and quicker and to minimize system "downtime." With the system probably in better condition than at any time in its history, San Franciscans have good reason to believe that the world's only working cable cars will continue rolling along at their nine-and-a-half-miles-per-hour pace for at least the *next* one hundred years. ★



The advent of the cable car made San Francisco's hilltops freely accessible for the first time, and development of real estate along the lines boomed. In this 1890 photograph, cable cars pass rows of mansions on California Street, near the summit of Nob Hill.

drums at the powerhouses. Engines were knocked from their mountings. Cable tracks curled up from their street foundations, exposing conduits tilted at various angles. (Many of the Market Street cable cars that escaped damage were used as temporary shelters for some of the three hundred thousand who became homeless as a result of the catastrophe.) The destruction was so complete that most systems were never rebuilt. Insurance firms were so inundated by the massive rush of claims that the most a cable company could recover was fifty cents to the dollar.

As the mid-twentieth century ap-

proached there were further indications that the cable car's once-supreme role in San Francisco transportation was nearing its end. Electric trolleys, diesel-powered buses, and automobiles were crowding cable cars off many city streets. Headlines like "Doom of the Cable Cars Sealed" and "We'll Miss Them" appeared in newspapers, proclaiming the cable cars's demise.

But an undercurrent of sentiment for the picturesque cable cars that "climb half way to the stars" was growing. When progressive, anti-cable Mayor Roger Lapham made his way through the city in 1947 in a horse and carriage declaring that he had already placed an order for diesel-powered buses to replace the cable car lines, he only increased interest in the cause.

As early as 1941, when a rumor had spread that the original Clay Street cable line would be replaced by buses, a campaign to "Save the Cable Cars" had begun. A preservation league was formed, but the

group eventually watched the final run of the world's first cable car line, the Clay Street line, on February 15, 1942.

Preservation-minded citizens continued their efforts, however, and thanks to their eventual success and a massive, \$60 million restoration project completed by the city in 1984, three cable car lines—the California, Powell-Mason, and Powell-Hyde routes—thrive in San Francisco today. More than a century after their inception, the cable cars can still climb 17- and 20-percent grades better than any other form of public transportation. These mechanical wonders of the Industrial Age are one of the city's leading tourist attractions, and sentiment for their historic significance remains strong: the city charter of 1955 guarantees that as long as there is a San Francisco, there will be a cable car system. ★

Billy C. Lewis is a free-lance writer and a resident of the San Francisco Bay area.



As the most popular American composer of the mid-nineteenth century, Stephen Collins Foster expressed the vibrant voice of the new American people.

“Dear Friends and Gentle Hearts”

by Allison Thompson

WHEN COMPOSER STEPHEN FOSTER died in the paupers' wing of New York's Bellevue Hospital on January 13, 1864, all that he possessed was a purse containing a penny for every year of his life—thirty-eight cents—and a scrap of paper on which he had written in a shaky hand the phrase, “Dear Friends and Gentle Hearts.” Perhaps this was to have been the title of a song never written. But despite the depth of his poverty, Foster left a priceless legacy—over two hundred songs, many of which have become an inseparable part of the American cultural heritage.

Foster wrote music and lyrics for nearly twenty years, from 1844 until his death in 1864. During this time gold was discovered in California, the war with Mexico was fought and won, and the conflict between the states neared its bloody climax. It was part of a bustling, rough-and-ready age. Riverboatmen like Mike Fink fought and scrambled and ferried goods up and down mighty rivers that bore strange Indian names: Monongahela, Mississippi, Ohio. Davy Crockett and James Bowie perished at the Alamo. Stories about backwoods boys and frog-jumping contests poured from Mark Twain's pen. Frock-coated gamblers shuffled and dealt on the paddle-wheeled riverboats.

It was an era when Americans were seeking to define what made their still-adolescent but fast-growing country different from the Old World—and they needed songs to express their new nationalism. Stephen Foster filled this need, capturing the public's imagination with his “plantation melodies.” The first composer to express the vibrant voice of the new American people, he was destined to become the most popular American

composer of the mid-nineteenth century.

Stephen Collins Foster was born, auspiciously enough, on the same morning that both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died. The son of a Pittsburgh merchant, he grew up the spoiled youngest child of a large family. His mother Eliza bore ten children in twenty-one years but saw only six of them reach maturity. When Stephen's first cries were heard on the morning of July 4, 1826, his sister Charlotte was seventeen years of age; Ann Eliza, fourteen; Henry, eight; Henrietta, six; Dunning, five; and Morrison, three. An adopted brother, William Foster, Jr., was already away working.

By the time Stephen was seven, the family had become a little smaller. A younger brother, James, had been born and died; beautiful and accomplished Charlotte had perished at the age of twenty; and Ann Eliza had married and left Pittsburgh. Stephen would grow up closest in affection to Morrison, Dunning, and Henrietta.

The Fosters were a musical family. William had given his family a piano in 1828, and Charlotte was noted in Allegheny for her singing and playing, especially of sentimental ballads. But of all the children, Stephen exhibited the most precocious musical talent. When he was six, his mother wrote to William that “Stevan [sic] has a drum and marches about . . . with a feather in his hat and a girdle about his waist, whistling old lang syne . . . There still remains something perfectly original about him.” Just one year later, Stephen astonished his family by picking up a flageolet [a flutelike instrument] from the counter of a Pittsburgh music store and, though he had never before handled one, in a few minutes taught



himself to play "Hail Columbia" to the delight of clerks and customers. Soon after this incident he learned to play both the flute and piano. The talented youth would obtain some instruction from Henry Kleber, a German-born musician who ran a music store in Pittsburgh, but his formal musical training was limited.

AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN Stephen Foster sold his first musical composition, set to a poem by George Moore. "Open Thy Lattice, Love," published in 1844, was moderately successful and is a good example of the type of sentimental parlor song then popular:

Open thy lattice, love, listen to me:

*The cool balmy breeze is abroad on the sea;
The moon like a queen, roams her realms of blue,
And the stars keep their vigils in heaven for you.*

*Ere morn's gushing light tips the hills with its ray,
Away o'er the waters, away and away;
Then open thy lattice, love, listen to me;*

While the moon's in the sky and the breeze on the sea!

Young Stephen was often a worry to his family. Though studious, he had failed to adapt to school life

Although Stephen Foster's songs depicted blacks and their life in a sympathetic light, his vision of the Old South was a romanticized one. Painter Eastman Johnson's "My Old Kentucky Home, Life in the South," reflects a similar view.

and as a consequence was largely educated by tutors at home. He was quiet, and although he had achieved recognition in Allegheny as a musician, he hated to be classified as a mere entertainer. "It was difficult to get him to go into society at all," his brother Morrison later recalled. "He had a great aversion to its shams and glitter, and preferred the realities of his home and the quiet of his study. When he was eighteen years old, a lady who was an old friend of the family, gave a large party, and invited us all, and added, 'tell Stephen to bring his flute with him.' That settled it so far as he was concerned. He would not go a step. He said, 'tell Mrs. — I will send my flute if she desires it.'"

In 1846, when Stephen was twenty, his father suggested that he go to his brother Dunning's commission house in Cincinnati to learn the work of a bookkeeper. Stephen spent nearly two years as a clerk there, and

Today Stephen Foster remains not the greatest but the most uniquely American composer.

while in that city wrote and sold four more songs, "Oh! Susanna," "Old Uncle Ned," "Louisiana Belle," and "Away Down South," all published in 1848 in *Songs of the Sable Harmonists*.

With its bright and lively tune and amusing lyrics, "Oh! Susanna" was an instant success. Its publication coincided with the discovery of gold in California, and the song soon became the unofficial anthem for the thousands of Forty-Niners departing for the West. "I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee," they sang as they trudged across the desert or sailed around the Horn toward the promise of riches. Encouraged by the song's popularity, Stephen Foster now turned all of his energies to music.

These four compositions were the first of many minstrel songs (or "Ethiopian melodies," as Stephen at first preferred to call them) the young composer would write during the next several years. The genre was already a familiar one, for minstrel shows had been all the rage while Foster was growing up. Although there are records of black-face performances before 1800, the true minstrel show with jokes, a "bones" man, and song and dance routines had come into being in the late 1820s when "Daddy" Thomas D. Rice, a white music hall artist, blackened his face, put on rags, and performed the song and dance known as "Jump, Jim Crow." Stephen had not only seen Rice's performances, but as a child was himself the star of a neighborhood children's minstrel theater.

Numerous troupes of minstrel performers had sprung up, one of the most notable being Edwin P. Christy's Minstrels. The neophyte composer soon became associated with Christy, granting the well-known showman permission to perform his songs prior to publication so as to popularize them. In 1851 he sold Christy rights to his song "Old Folks at Home" [also known as "Way Down Upon De Swanee River"] for fifteen dollars. (The latter agreement allowed Christy to list himself as composer, and it was not until this song was re-copyrighted in 1879 that Foster's name appeared as the rightful author.)

"Old Folks at Home" was immensely popular, with more than three hundred thousand music sheets being quickly sold. Less than a year after it was published, a writer in the *Albany State Review* reported that "'Old Folks at Home,' the last negro melody, is on everybody's tongue, and consequently in everybody's mouth. Pianos and guitars groan to it, night and day; sentimental young ladies sing it . . . all the bands play it; amateur

flute players agonize over it at every spare moment; the street organs grind it out . . . the butcher boy treats you to a strain or two as he hands in the steak for dinner; the milkman mixes it up strangely with the harsh ding-dong of his bell . . . indeed at every hour we are forcibly impressed with the fact that

*Way down upon de Swanee Ribber
Far, far away,
Dere' whar my heart is turnin' ebber
Dere's whar de old folks stay."*

The issue of Foster's "darky language" in this and other plantation songs is a difficult one to address today, and it also troubled some audiences in the composer's own time. Most minstrel show songs from other composers are painful for modern audiences in their denigrating portrait of blacks. But although Foster employed the same dialect, his songs—particularly the "pathetic" type such as "Old Black Joe" or even "Massa's In De Cold Ground"—almost always depicted blacks in a warm and sympathetic light. Even the composer's comic songs are gently silly rather than cruel.

In addition to his exposure to the minstrel songs of earlier composers, Foster became acquainted with Negro spirituals at the church of a family servant, and he undoubtedly heard Negro work songs on the Ohio River. But curiously, while his best-remembered compositions relate to the Old South, Foster would make only one trip into Dixie, visiting New Orleans in 1852. As a consequence, perhaps, the vision that his songs present of plantation life is a highly romanticized and idyllic one.

DESPITE HIS EARLY SUCCESSES as a composer and songwriter, Foster continued to be a concern to his parents. His sisters were married, Henry had found employment in the Treasury Department in Washington, William was so well established as an engineer that at times he supported the whole family, and Morrison and Dunning also had good jobs—only Stephen refused to settle into something "useful." Then he found a bride—Jane McDowell, daughter of a prosperous Pittsburgh doctor. They were married on July 22, 1850.

At first the young couple appeared to be happy. After a short honeymoon trip they moved in with Stephen's parents, and it was in the Foster family home that their daughter Marion was born a year later. Stephen rented an office in which to work and continued composing furiously. Morrison later recalled this calm and happy time:

"He [Stephen] would sit at home in the evening at the piano and improvise by the hour beautiful strains and harmonies which he did not preserve, but let them float

Suggested additional reading: Stephen Collins Foster by H. V. Milligan (G. Schirmer, 1920) and Stephen Foster: America's Troubadour (Thomas Y. Crowell, 1934). (Both titles are currently in print in more recent editions.)

away like fragrant flowers cast upon the flowing water. Occasionally he would vary his occupation by singing in plaintive tones of his own or other favorite songs. Of the latter he much admired the 'May Queen' of Tenyson, and the music as composed by Mr. Dempster. His rendering of the verse 'Tonight I saw the sun set, he set and left behind,' etc., was truly pathetic. At times tears could be seen on his cheeks as he sang this song, so sensitive was his nature to the influence of true poetry combined with music. I usually sat near him on these occasions and listened quietly with profound delight. Sometimes he would whirl round on the piano stool and converse a few moments with me, then resume his improvisations and his singing."

It was during the productive early years of his marriage that Stephen wrote many of his most popular songs, including "Camptown Races" (1850); "Oh! Boys, Carry Me 'Long" (1851); "Old Folks At Home" (1851); "Massa's in De Cold Ground" (1852); "Old Dog Tray" (1853); and "My Old Kentucky Home" (1853).

One Foster biographer and critic, William Austin, divides the composer's works into three categories as represented respectively by "Susanna," "Jennie," and "Old Folks At Home": comic, sentimental (by far the most numerous category), and pathetic, as in inspiring pathos. "My Old Kentucky Home" is one of the best examples of the latter genre and, particularly in the second verse, is also one of the finest examples of Stephen's poetic, as well as musical, talents:

*They hunt no more for the possum and the coon,
On the meadow, the hill and the shore,
They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon,
On the bench by the old cabin door.
The day goes by like a shadow o'er the heart,
With sorrow where all was delight:
The time has come when the darkies have to part,
Then my old Kentucky Home, good-night.*

*Weep no more my lady, Oh! weep no more today!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky Home,
For the old Kentucky Home, far away.*

During the final years of his career, Foster would virtually abandon the "Ethiopian" song and instead concentrate on sentimental ballads of love and the Civil War battlefield. Some of these titles would include "Was My Brother in the Battle?," "Why, No One to Love?," "Bury Me in the Morning, Mother," and "Willie's Gone to Heaven."

A FEW YEARS after Stephen and Jane married, things began to go wrong. The couple apparently quarreled, probably over Stephen's lack of a steady income and his profligate spending habits. They were separated for almost a year during 1853-1854. Stephen went to New York City and during this time wrote the enduring "Jennie with the Light Brown Hair," which some say was a tribute to his wife.

A Stephen Foster Museum

Visitors to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, have the opportunity to view the world's largest collection of historical artifacts and memorabilia of composer Stephen Foster. Located on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh, the Stephen Foster Memorial is a museum, library, and research center that not only focuses on the life and music of the famous composer, but contains exhibits and resources on nineteenth-century American music as well. Museum displays include Foster family memorabilia, musical instruments, manuscripts, and music sheets. The museum and library are open Monday through Friday, 8:30-4:30 (closed on weekends and university holidays). Admission is free. Group tours are available (fees apply). For additional information, telephone (412) 624-4100.

Foster returned to Pittsburgh in the fall of 1854, but early the next year tragedy struck. His adored mother suddenly died, and his father followed soon after. The next year William died, followed three years later by Dunning. Henry was far away in Washington, Ann Eliza and Henrietta in Ohio. Now there was really only Morrison left.

Stephen, long attuned to home, parents, and siblings, had failed to create a new life for himself and his own young family. The happiness and security of his childhood were gone now, never to be recaptured. His songs, seemingly less inspired than in the past, were not selling as well as in former years, and he had already been advanced more from his publishers than he could hope to earn. In 1861 Stephen left Jane again and moved back to New York, where he would spend the last four years of his life.

They were hard times. In 1860 Foster had become overdrawn with Firth, Pond & Co., his publishers, for \$1,397. In desperation he sold his interest in sixteen songs to them for \$1,600, and thus was able to settle his debts. (He had always been a poor businessman, trading publication rights to some of his compositions for printed copies of the songs and selling others for as little as ten dollars apiece. Foster would receive a grand total of just over fifteen thousand dollars—or an average of just \$1,372 per year—for all of his songs during his productive years from 1849 to 1860.)

He struggled on, receiving only a pittance for hack work, living in New York's Bowery, and subsisting on raw apples, turnips, and quantities of cheap rum. His friend and co-lyricist George Cooper later stated that Foster drank "continuously," although he never saw him drunk. At least one biographer has suggested that the composer suffered from tuberculosis.

The end was swift but miserable for the man whose songs had once brought pleasure and delight to millions from coast to coast. In January 1864 Stephen fell seri-

Memorabilia from the life of Stephen Foster, preserved at the Foster Memorial at the University of Pittsburgh, includes a daguerreotype of the composer and his handwritten music for "Old Folks at Home."

ously ill with fever and ague. Attempting to get out of bed in his Bowery room, he fell against a washstand and cut his throat badly on a pottery shard. Cooper found him naked, bleeding, and unconscious, and sent for a doctor who began to sew up the gash in Stephen's throat with coarse black thread, finding no white thread handy.

Horried, Cooper stopped him, took Stephen to the hospital, and telegraphed for Morrison and Jane. But before they could reach New York, Stephen Foster had died. He was buried in Pittsburgh.

Immediately after Foster's death, his publishers rushed his last works into print. And just as quickly, imputations that Foster was a drunkard and that drinking had brought about his end were circulated, much to his family's distress.

His output near the end had been enormous: ninety songs, including those published posthumously, were copyrighted during the final three years—forty-five in 1863 alone. But with one exception—"Beautiful Dreamer," published a month after Foster's death and billed (along with several others) as the last song he wrote—none were destined to enjoy the popularity of those from the composer's earlier, happier times.

How should we evaluate the songs and instrumental compositions of Stephen Collins Foster? His melodies are simple and the harmonies and arrangements untutored and sometimes childlike—but he truly had the gift of song. Some of his works, including "Old Folks at Home," "Oh! Susanna," and "Camptown Races" have passed beyond the realm of intellectual criticism and achieved immortality as part of the American folk tradition.

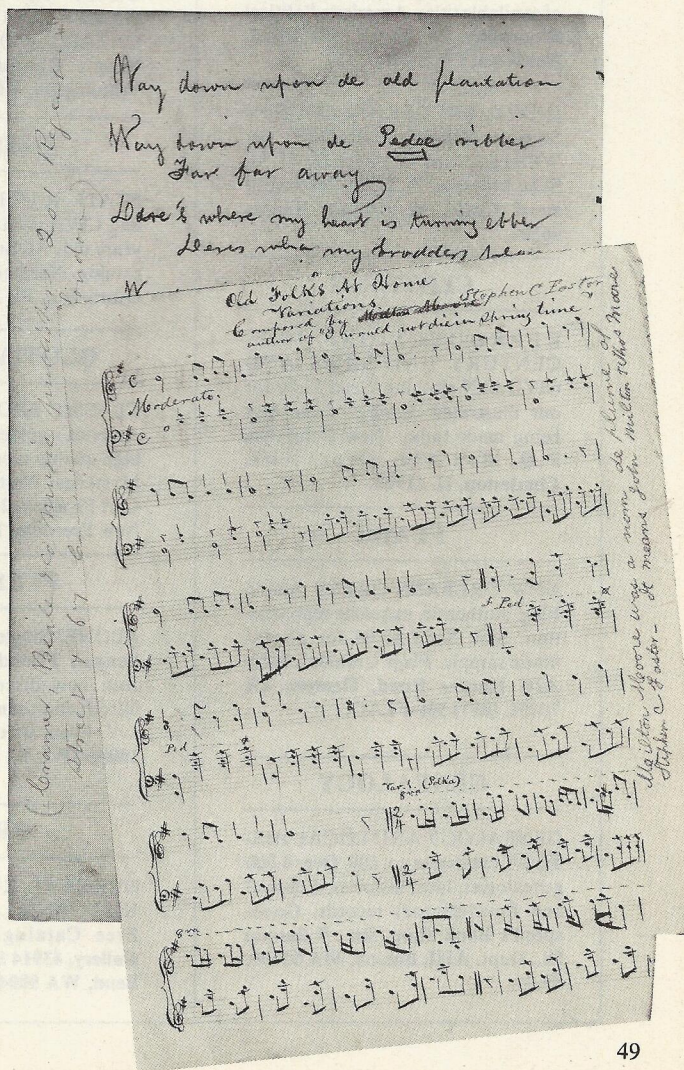
Further, Stephen Foster succeeded, with his early and most popular works, in capturing the new voice of the American people. He wrote poignantly of canebrakes and of race tracks, of blacks and of plantation life, of love and of beauty, and of the hard times that poor folks—banished from the scenes of happy childhood days—know. Today Stephen Foster remains not the greatest but the most uniquely American composer.

*Let us pause in life's pleasures and count its many tears,
While we all sup sorrow with the poor:
There's a song that will linger forever in our ears;
Oh! Hard Times, come again no more.*

*'Tis the song, the sigh of the weary;
Hard Times, Hard Times, come again no more;
Many times you have lingered around my cabin door;
Oh! Hard Times, come again no more. ★*

Allison Thompson is a free lance writer in Stephen Foster's hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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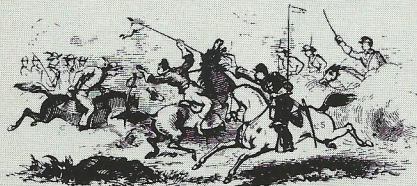
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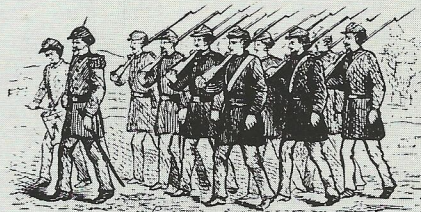
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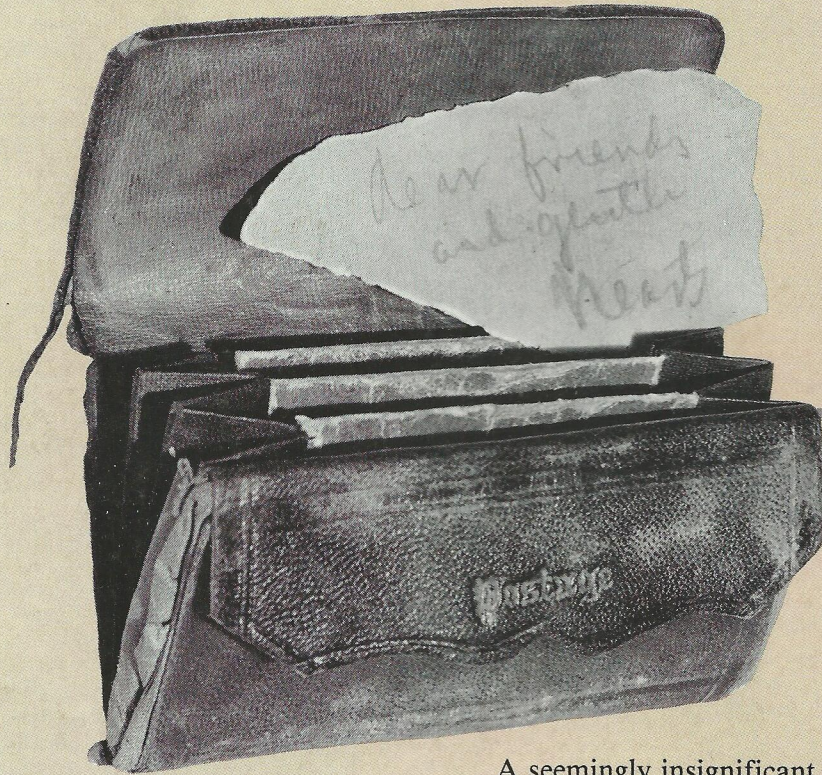
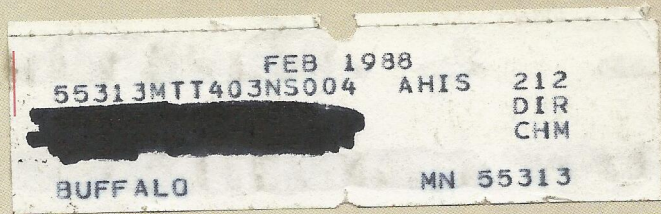
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A seemingly insignificant artifact, this tattered pocketbook is in fact a relic of shattered dreams and despair. The last possession of the man who would later be revered as the greatest American composer of the mid-nineteenth century, it contained, at the time of his death, thirty-eight cents and a scrap of paper bearing what may have been the title of an unwritten song. A profile of the fruitful but increasingly desperate life of Stephen Collins Foster appears in this issue.